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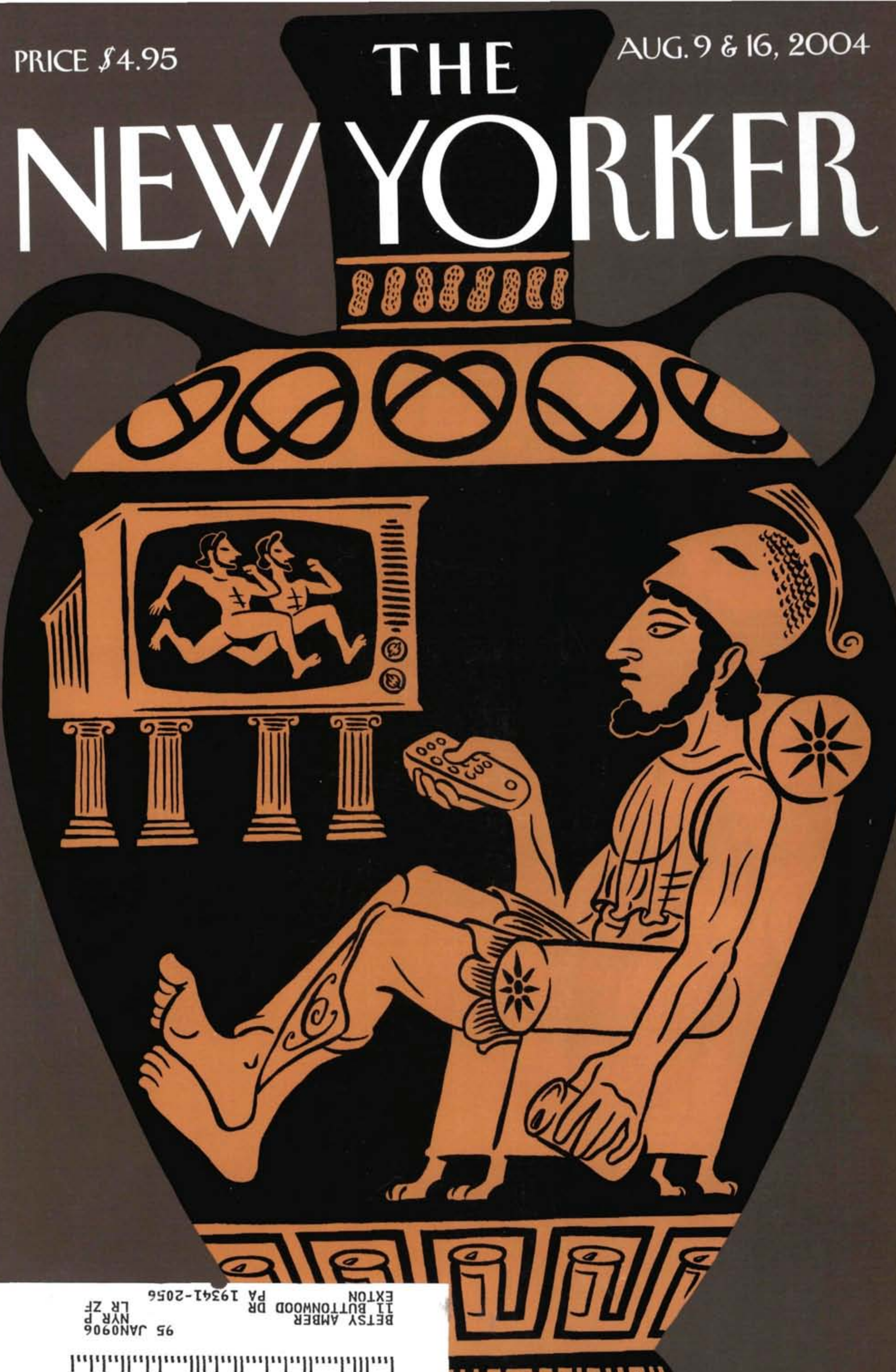

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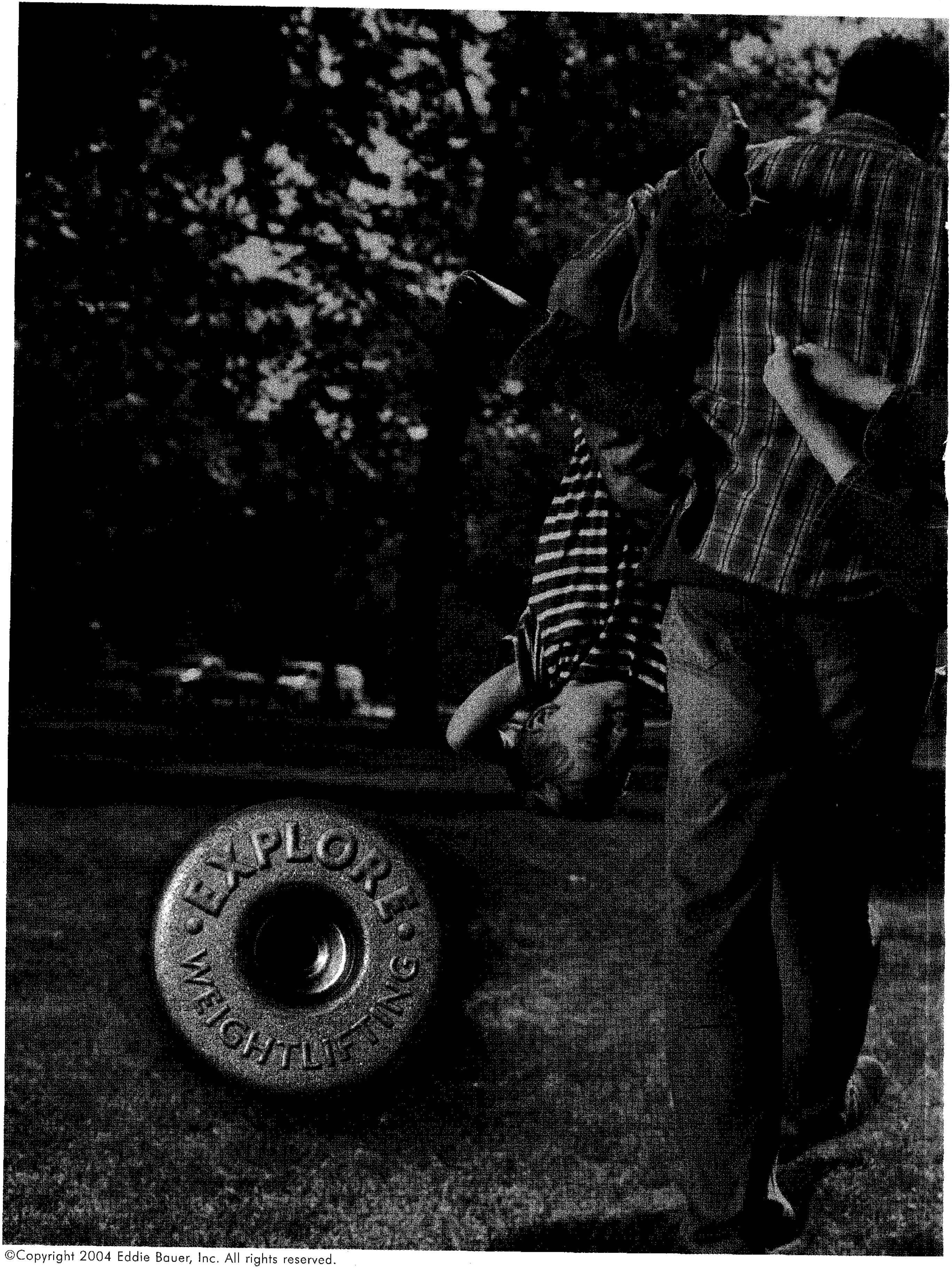
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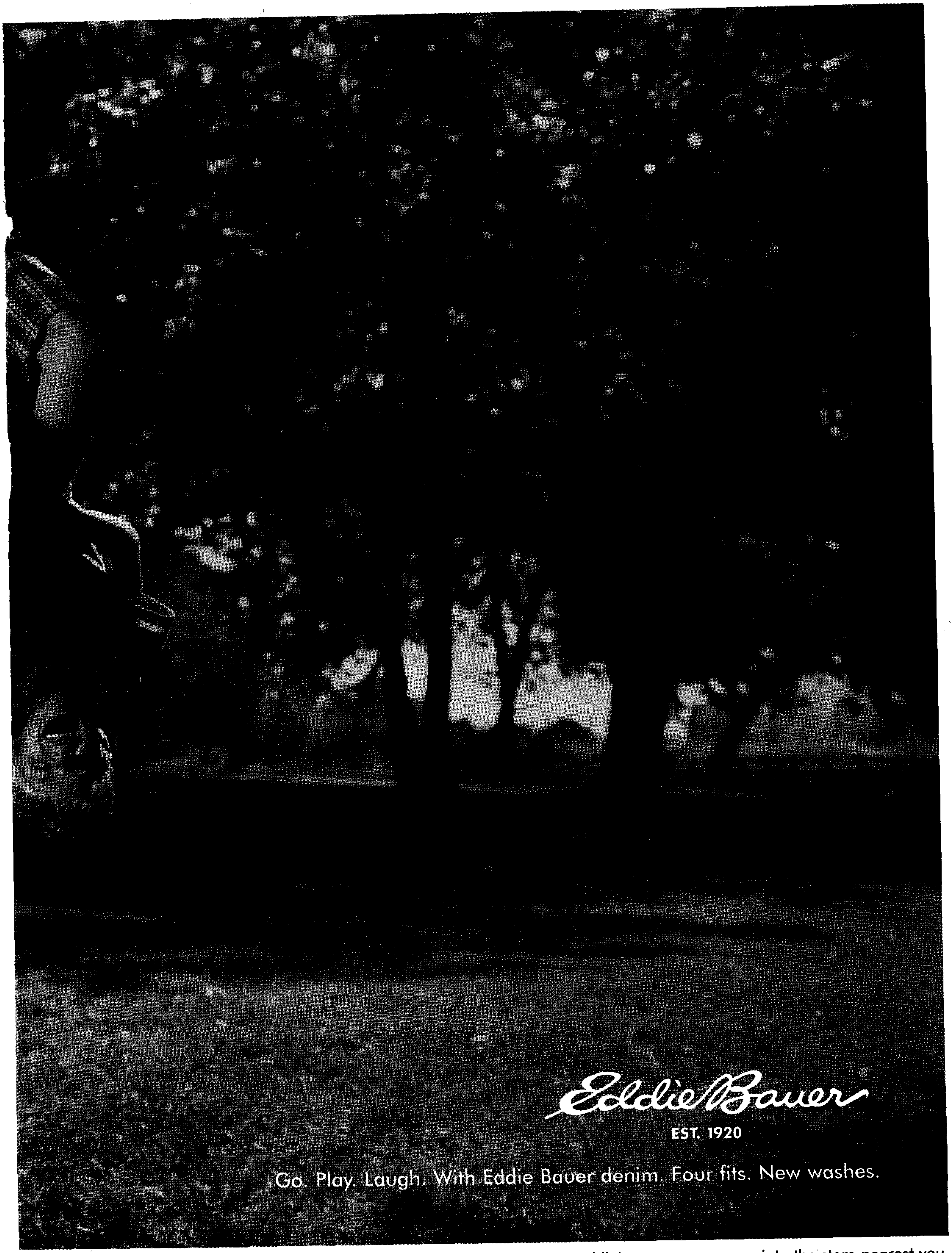
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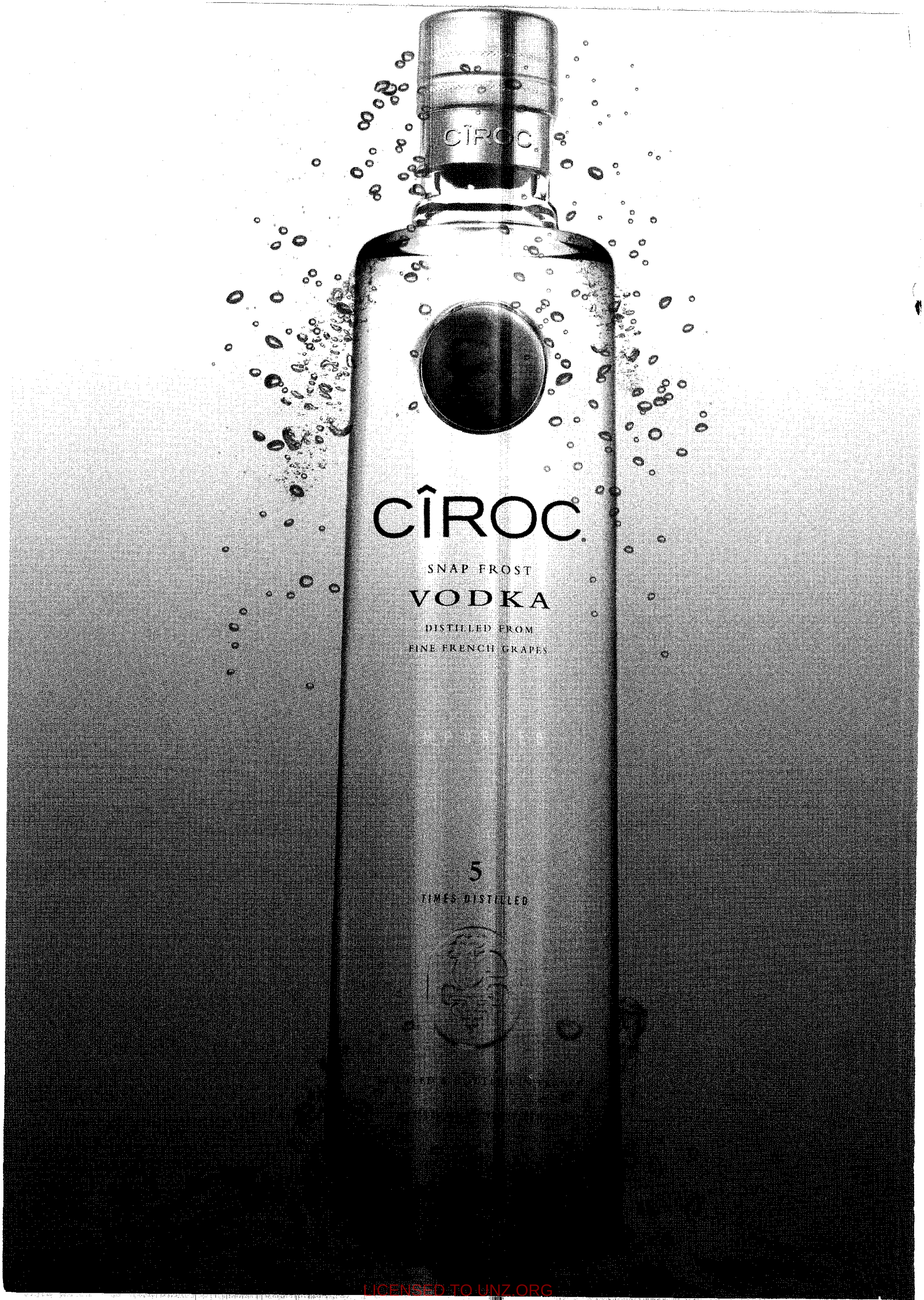
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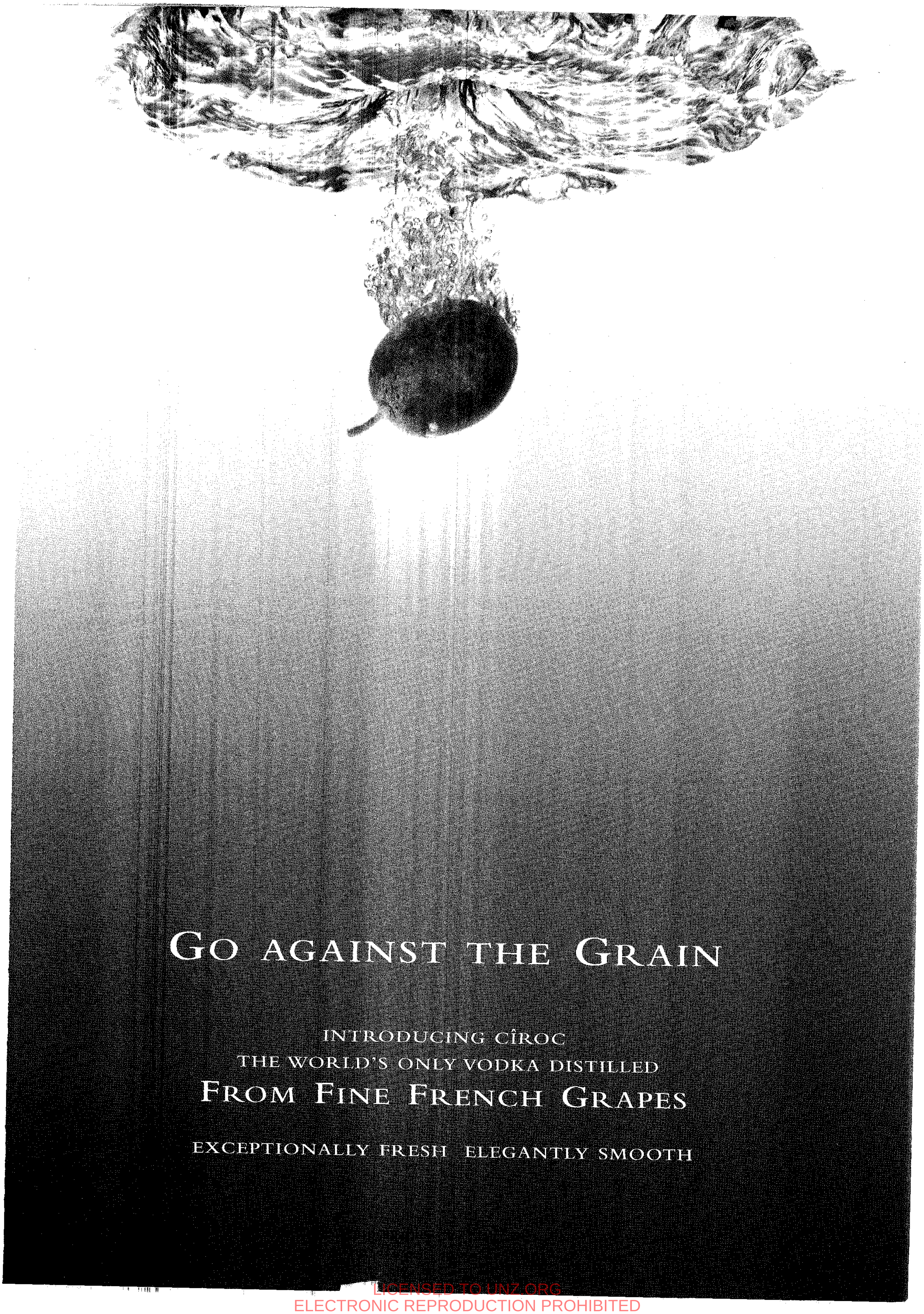
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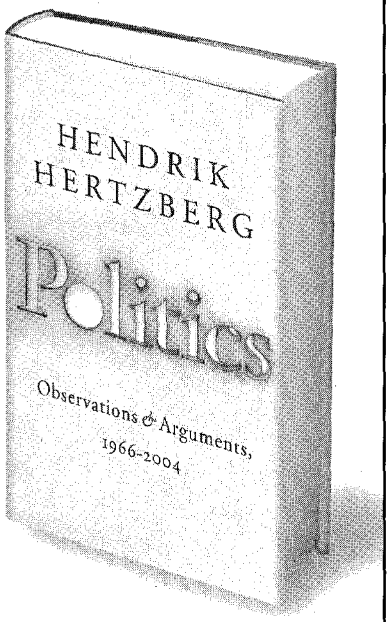

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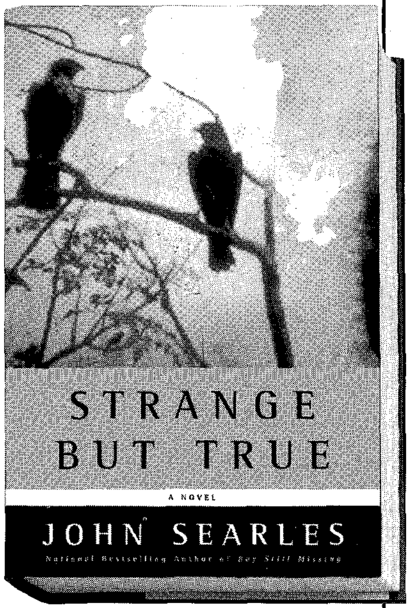

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CONTRIBUTORS

Margaret Talbot ("The Bad Mother," p. 62) is a staff writer and a Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation.

Roger Angell ("Getting There," p. 54) is a fiction editor at the magazine. Two of his early baseball books, "The Summer Game" and "Five Seasons," have just been reissued in paperback.

Adam Green ("Standup for the Lord," p. 46), a regular contributor, also writes about theatre for *Vogue.*

Andy Borowitz (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 53) has just won the National Press Club's first award for humor. His new book, "The Borowitz Report: The Big Book of Shockers," comes out in October.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 38) is a staff writer.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 44), who writes a column on business and finance, published his first book, "The Wisdom of Crowds," in May.

Dan Baum ("Two Soldiers," p. 76) is a staff writer.

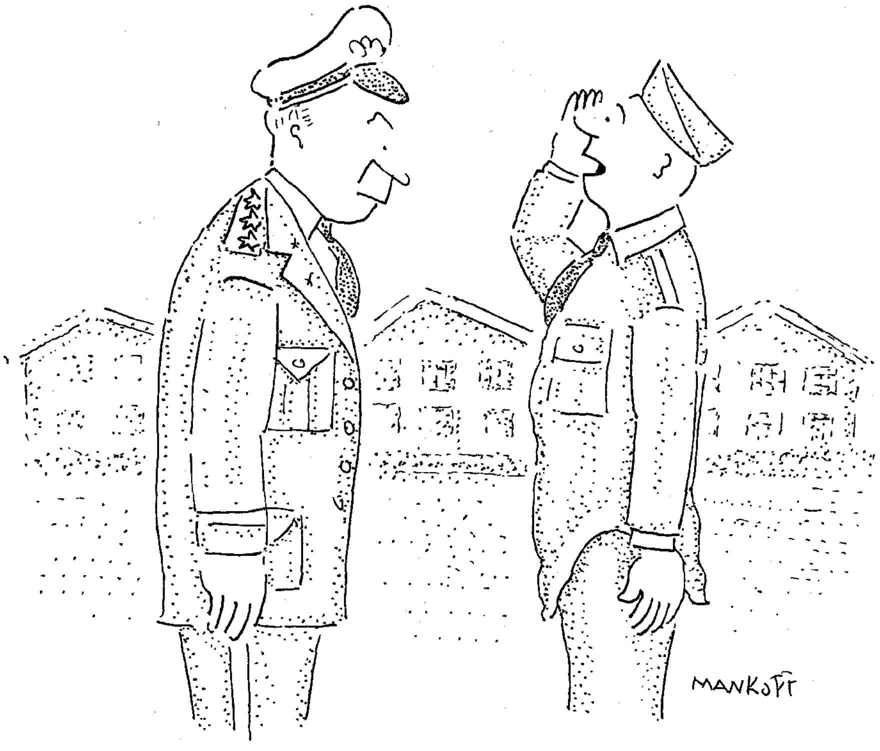
Wislawa Szymborska (Poem, p. 81) won the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. She is the author of "Miracle Fair: Selected Poems" and "Nonrequired Reading," a collection of prose pieces.

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 90) is the author of "The Metaphysical Club," which won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 2002. He is a professor of English at Harvard.

George Saunders (Fiction, p. 86) has just completed a collection of nonfiction pieces, entitled "Flag in Your Face." He teaches in the Syracuse University Creative Writing Program.

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 100) is the magazine's pop-music critic.

Roz Chast (The Back Page, p. 108) contributes regularly to the magazine. Her latest book is "The Party, After You Left." ♦



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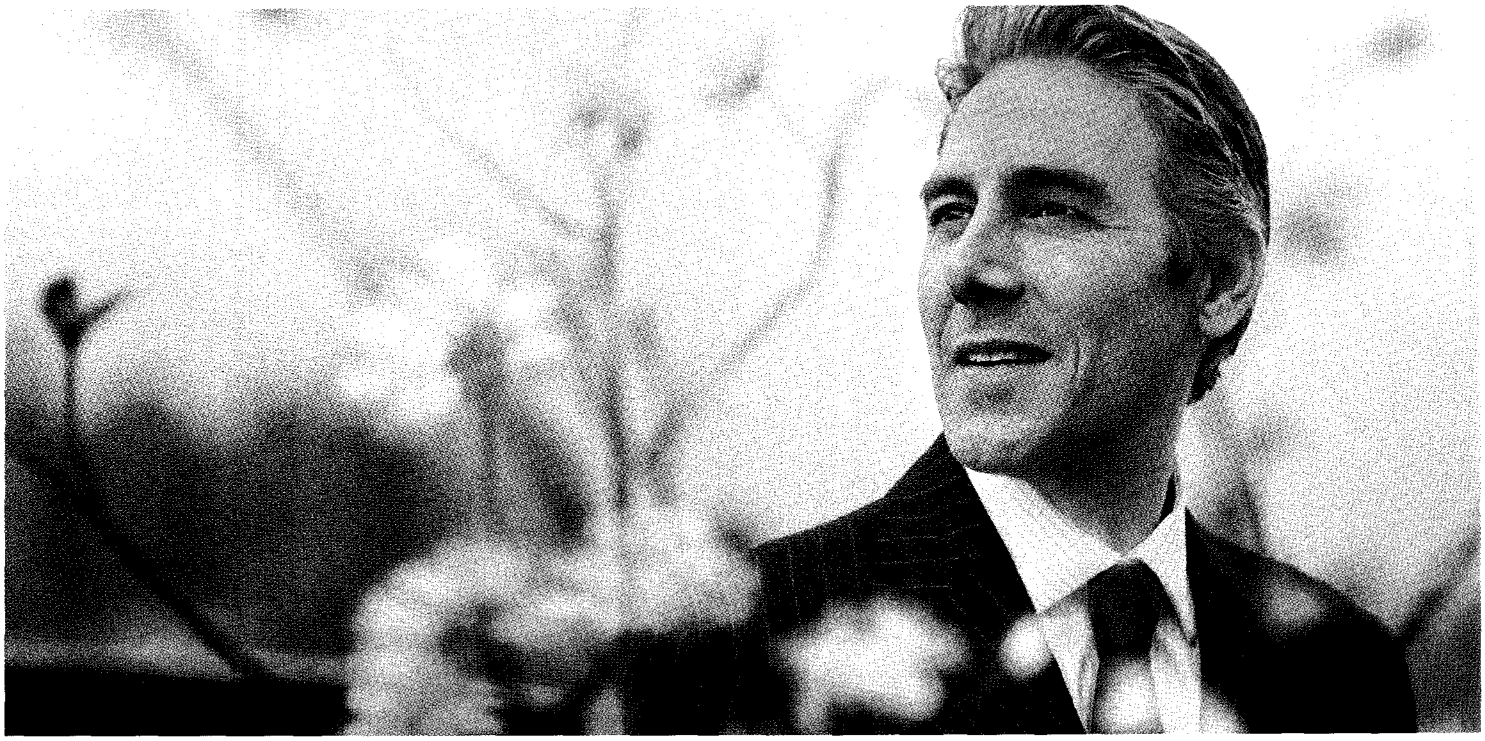

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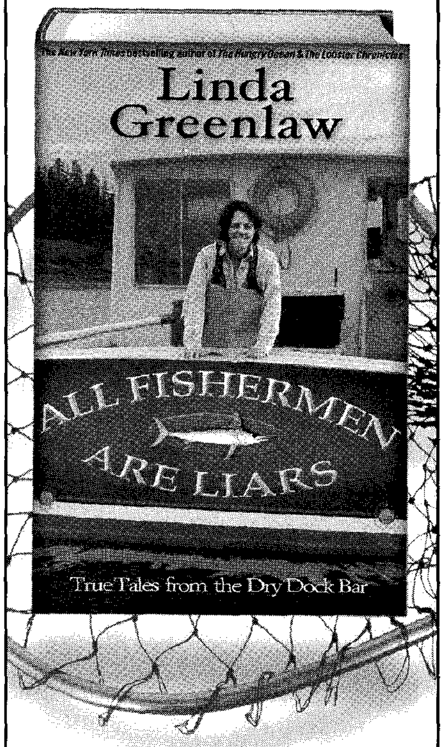
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CHEAPER IN INDIA

In "The Best Job in Town," Katherine Boo describes the impact on workers in Chennai, India, of the outsourcing of white-collar labor via the entrepreneurial efforts of two Americans, Joe Sigelman and Randy Altschuler (July 5th). Sigelman openly looks forward to a political career in America. This is an odd ambition, given that the constituency he is building is in India, China, Eastern Europe, and the Philippines, not in America. It will be more difficult to explain the benefits of outsourced labor to American voters than it has been to satisfy the demand of American corporations for cheap labor.
Doug Williams
Northbrook, Ill.

The scenes in Boo's article of Indian copy editors correcting the spelling and grammar of Americans points to one of the root causes of the outsourcing movement: poor education. After more than twenty years in which education funding in this country has been steadily gutted, from the elementary-school level through the public-university system, should it surprise anyone that corporations seek higher-quality work from a nation that places a high premium on education? Illiteracy, semi-literacy, and low mathematical aptitude are telling indicators of a nation's economic prospects. How long will it be until the United States qualifies as a developing nation?
Michael Webster
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Boo makes the case that the idea that jobs should be distributed on the basis of merit is a new and foreign notion in India, one that finds itself opposed to an age-old statism. But ideas about equality and merit did not arrive in India on a plane from New York in the nineties. To take one example, the notion of equality was at the center of the heterodox Buddhist revolt against Vedic orthodoxy. Even more relevant are India's post-independence attempts at egalitarianism, which have produced relatively meritocratic institutions in both the public sphere, such as the powerful civil services, and the private, such as the Tata Group. What is new about the growth of firms like Office Tiger is their capacity to vastly expand the reach of these ideas beyond the confines of what had been a snail-paced economy. It is an evolution, but the changes were set in motion by India's experiment with liberal democracy. This experiment might yet fail; the source of failure, however, is likely to be inept policy-making or corruption, not a cultural clash between new ideas and an imaginary eternal India.
Samir Patil
New York City

Boo's article evoked the humid earnestness of India, but it also made me think of a much colder place: Dickens's London. Was it just her description of Sigelman and Altschuler—who, from youth, "shared abstemiousness and obsessive work habits"—that conjured up Scrooge? Or was it the sense that when—not if—the firm moves on, its formula for those left behind will resemble Scrooge's: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" Outsourcing provides opportunities only as long as educated, motivated Indians are paid one-tenth of American wages, or less.
James K. Kjorvestad
San Francisco, Calif.

Boo puts faces on the agents of globalization who stitch world economies together even as they unravel the fabric of communities, rich and poor. In distant lands, American entrepreneurs preaching market values may talk about company loyalty, but they're keeping their own bags packed.
Peter Cleary Yeager
Framingham, Mass.

•

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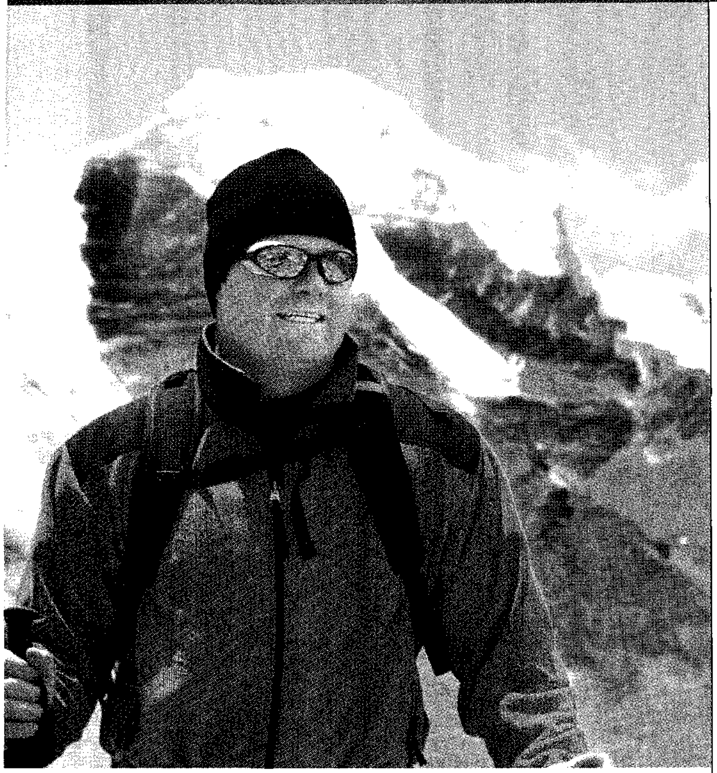

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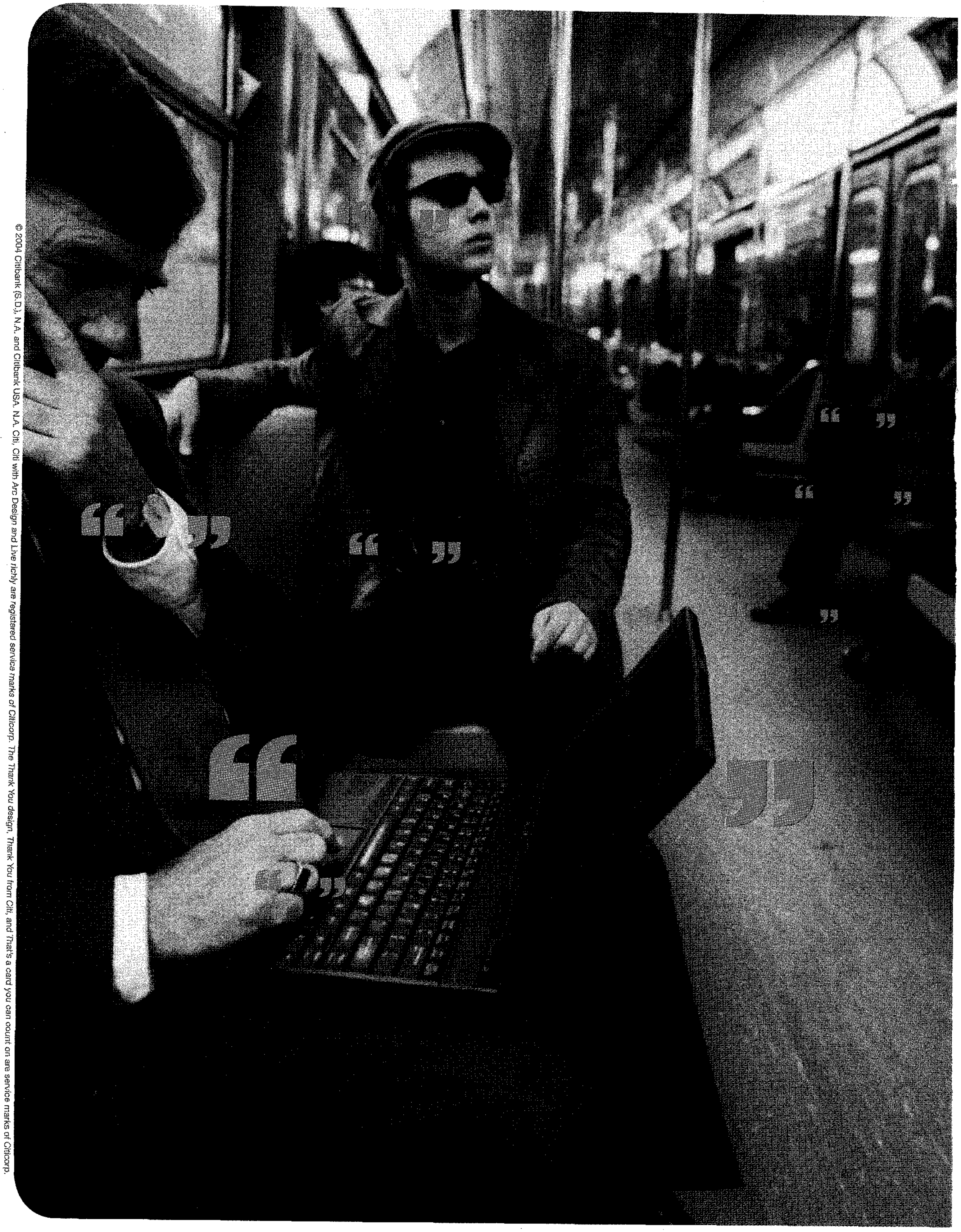

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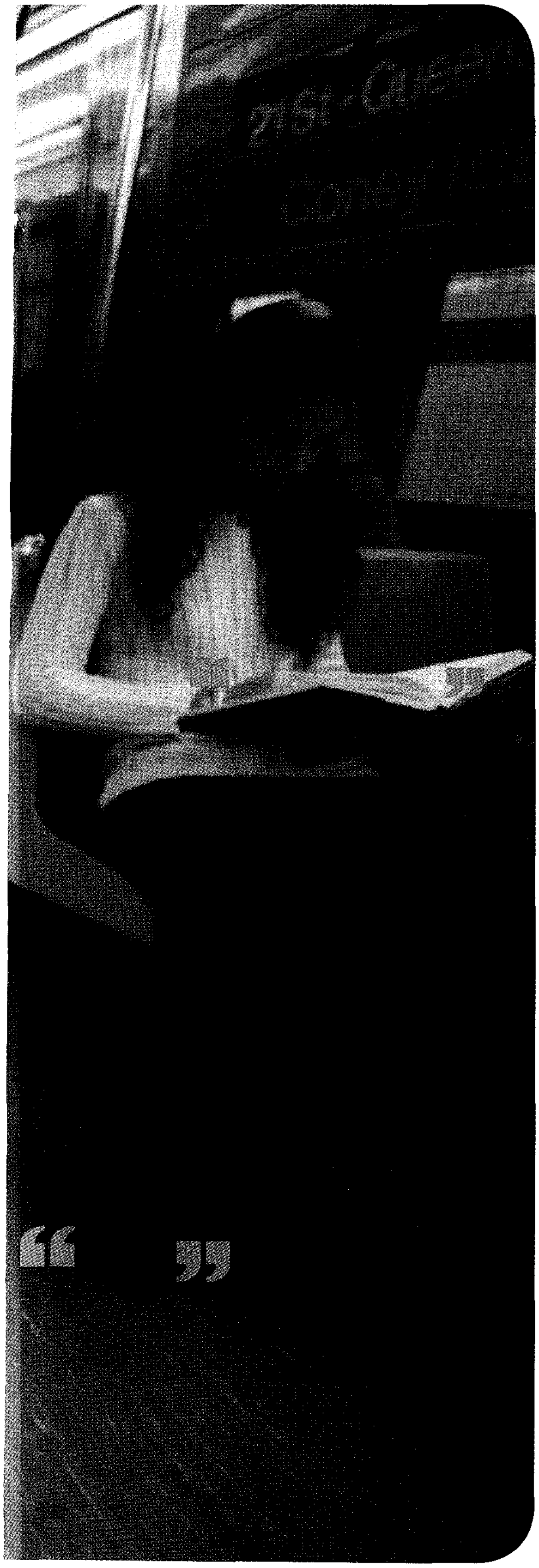

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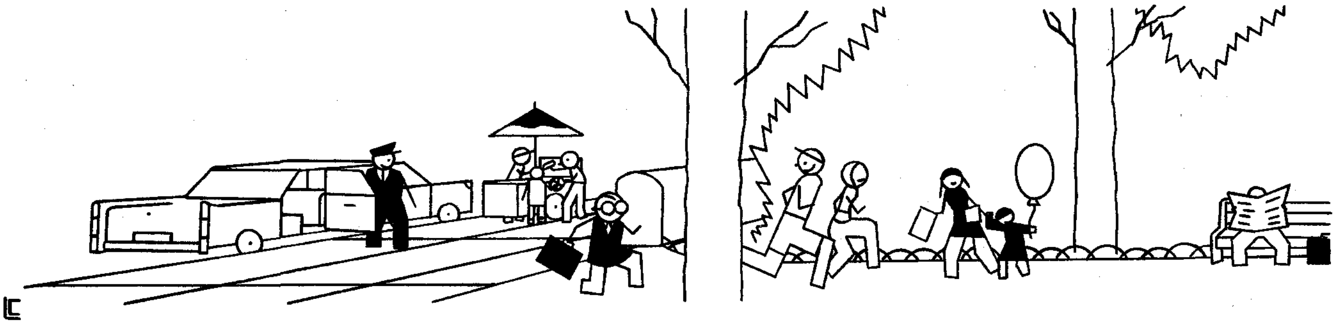

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THIS WEEK

BACK TO BASICS

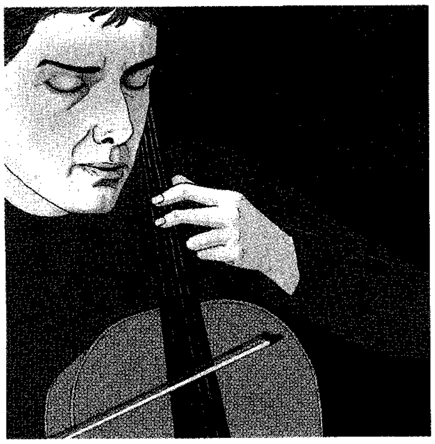
Steven Van Zandt is best known as the guitarist in Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band—or, depending on your demographic, as Silvio Dante in "The Sopranos." He's also a musical impresario. For the last few years, Van Zandt has hosted a syndicated radio show, "Little Steven's Underground Garage," devoted to nuts-and-bolts rock and roll. This weekend, he presents a live version of the radio show. There are more than two dozen bands, including groups from the sixties like the Electric Prunes and the Pretty Things; seventies acts like the Stooges, Big Star, and the New York Dolls (who will go on with the show despite the recent death of their founding bassist, Arthur Kane); and new talent like the Shazam, the Raveonettes, and the Star Spangles. (Randall's Island, Aug. 14; see Night Life.)

DUTCH TREAT

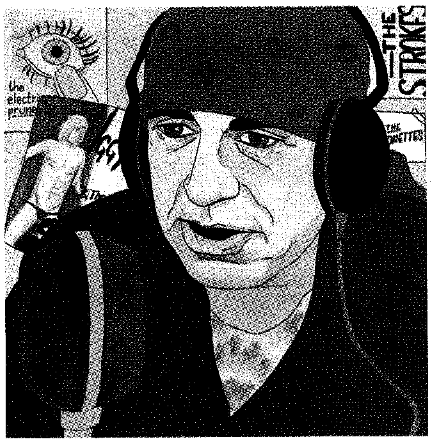
The Dutch cellist Pieter Wispelwey is the moon to Yo-Yo Ma's blazing sun, a musician who brings a dusky tone and a restless intellectuality to repertory ranging from Vivaldi and Dvořák to Elliott Carter and Brett Dean. He's the guest of honor at the Mostly Mozart Festival this week, appearing not only in Schumann's Cello Concerto but in three late-night concerts surveying Bach's Six Suites for Solo Cello. (Kaplan Penthouse and Avery Fisher Hall, beginning Aug. 10; see Classical Music.)

STILL LOVERLY

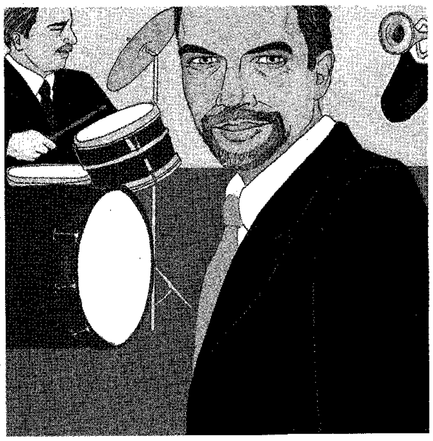
No one knows the craft of film scoring better than John Williams, but his greatest gift may be his versatility; his 1964 jazz-orchestra arrangement of highlights from Lerner and Loewe's "My Fair Lady," recorded with the drummer Shelly Manne, has become a cult favorite. Williams and a new crew (with Steve Houghton on drums this time) bring it back to life at Tanglewood, with Brian Stokes Mitchell and Dianne Reeves. (Aug. 8-9; see Classical Music.)



The cellist Pieter Wispelwey, at the Mostly Mozart Festival.



Little Steven hosts a garage-rock festival, at Randall's Island.



John Williams's jazz-orchestra arrangement of "My Fair Lady."

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To celebrate a decade of groundbreaking photography in the magazine, *The New Yorker* held a reception for its readers and friends at the International Center of Photography. The event took place on June 24th amid ICP's latest exhibit, *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China,* the first comprehensive look at the innovative photo and video art produced in China since the mid-1990s. There were cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, and guests could have their photographs taken at digital photography stations.

International Center of Photography

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Sidiki, a Guinean singer and dancer, performs in Prospect Park (see Night Life).

JASON TODD

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE DAY EMILY MARRIED
Estelle Parsons leads the cast in a Primary Stages production of a new play by Horton Foote about newlyweds who move in with the bride's aged parents. Directed by Michael Wilson. In previews. Opens Aug. 5 at 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

DRACULA, THE MUSICAL
A new Broadway play inspired by the Bram Stoker horror story, starring Melissa Errico and Tom Hewitt, has a book by Christopher Hampton, music by Frank Wildhorn, and lyrics by Don Black. Directed by Des McAnuff. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

ICE FACTORY '04
The Soho Think Tank's summer play festival concludes with two shows. "Doctor Tedrow's Last Breath," by the Deep Ellum Ensemble, follows the travails of a weatherman named Thaddeus Tedrow who is haunted by the hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas, in 1900, leaving eight thousand dead (Aug. 4-7 at 7). "Tannhauser (the Play)," by Joseph Gallo, based on Wagner's opera, is about a husband and wife who run an online porn site (Aug. 11-14 at 7). (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

MEDEA IN JERUSALEM
The ravishing Rebecca Wisocky stars in a new production of Euripides' tragedy, adapted by Roger Kirby, that portrays Medea as a Palestinian Muslim and Jason as an Israeli Jew. Directed by Steven Little. Previews begin Aug. 5. Opens Aug. 9 at 8. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
The festival, now in its eighth year, crams nearly two hundred shows into two weeks of performances in dozens of venues around town. Aug. 13-29. (212-279-4488. For a list of venues and performances, see www.fringenyc.org.)

PLUMS IN NEW YORK
A young woman obsessed with plums and August Strindberg visits Manhattan, in a play written and performed by Anna Rósa Sigurdardóttir. A production of the Icelandic Connection. Directed by Hera Ólafsdottir. Previews begin Aug. 5. Opens Aug. 15 at 7. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE TRIPLE HAPPINESS
Ally Sheedy leads the cast in a new comedy by Brooke Berman about a movie star and a starry-eyed college girl who disrupt the life of a Westchester family. Directed by Michael John Garcés. Part of Second Stage Theatre's "New Plays Uptown" series. In previews. Opens Aug. 9 at 7. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AFTER THE FALL
Peter Krause and Carla Gugino star in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival of the Arthur Miller play. Directed by Michael Mayer. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

ANTIGONE
The National Asian-American Theatre Company's production of Sophocles' tragedy stresses the personal ties among the characters, making much of the fact that Creon (Mia Katigbak) is not only a king but Antigone's uncle; when Antigone (Eunice Wong) buries her brother, it is a twofold act of defiance. The director, Jean Randich, makes stirring use of the chorus, and Sue Rees's charnel house of a set has dark allure, but when Wong is not onstage the proceedings can seem like kitchen-sink drama. (Intar 53, at 508 W. 53rd St. 212-244-0447. Through Aug. 14.)

ECHOES OF THE WAR
Two fine one-act plays by J. M. Barrie, written during the First World War, show emotions on the home front. In the first, "The New Word," starring Richard Easton and Aaron Krohn, a diffident father and son say their goodbyes. In the second, "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," Frances Sternhagen, playing a timid Scottish char who longs for a visit from her son, and Gareth Saxe, as the brusque, handsome son, both give brilliant performances. Directed by Eleanor Reissa. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

FICTION
A new play by Steven Dietz, in which two married writers explore the role that a young woman played in their lives. With assured performances by Emily Bergl, Tom Irwin, and Julie White. Directed by David Warren. (Roundabout, Laura Pels Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE FROGS
A new production of Stephen Sondheim and Burt Shevelove's musical from 1974, based on the Aristophanes comedy. With a new book by Nathan Lane, who plays the lead, Dionysos. Directed and choreographed by Susan Stroman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

FROM MY HOMETOWN
In a new musical featuring both original and Top Forty songs, three R. & B. singers named Detroit (André Garner), Memphis (Kevin R. Free), and Philly (Rodney Hicks) reminisce about their humble beginnings and their rise to stardom. The first few numbers, set outside the Apollo Theatre, give hope that the show will be a cleverly scored course in American soul. Instead, a didactic script takes over, undermining the trio's excellent singing and dancing. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 212-307-4100.)

I LOVE PARIS
On six consecutive Mondays, the actor Kevin Shinick channels the much publicized heiress Paris Hilton, who muses on such topics as "Split Ends: The Environmental Impact" and "Why Terrorism, Why Now?" Written by Doug Field and directed by Timothy Haskell. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

JUNIE B. JONES
In a chipper new musical based on the children's series by Barbara Park, the six-year-old heroine pops out of her diary—a ceiling-high prop. Junie B., played by the grownup Mary Faber, experiences the ups and downs of grade-school life, assisted by five cast members. Written by the promising duo Marcy Heisler (book and lyrics) and Zina Goldrich (music), the show has the dynamism, if not the irony, of "Little Shop of Horrors." Directed by Peter Flynn and choreographed by Devanand Janki, with sets by Luke Hegel-Cantarella and whimsical costumes by Lora LaVon. The show is the fifteenth annual production of the Theatreworks/USA's "Free Summer Theatre" series. (121 Christopher St. For more information, call 212-642-6754. Through Aug. 20.)

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING
The three men in the Aquila Theatre Company's adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's tale do a bang-up job. Richard Willis, playing Peachey Carnehan—one of a pair of down-and-outers who want to become kings of a primitive land—exhibits the same scrappy charm that Michael Caine gave the role in John Huston's 1975 film version; Anthony Cochrane, while no Sean Connery, is well cast as his pal, the lusty Scotsman Daniel Dravot; and Louis Butelli switches nimbly between the roles of a rheumy Kipling and a cringing native batman. But, alas, the play can't match the sweep and ambition of the film. Directed by Robert Richmond. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH
A. R. Gurney's play about a Connecticut Wasp who had a compromising relationship with the current President returns to the Flea. Directed by Jim Simpson. (41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through Sept. 4.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
The idiosyncratic, perpetually boyish, and unequivocally American actor Sam Waterston gives the performance of his career as the alternately loving, baffled, and furious patriarch Leonato in Shakespeare's play. The governor of Messina, on the island of Sicily, Leonato is also the father of Hero (played by Waterston's own daughter, the lovely Elisabeth Waterston) and the guardian of Beatrice, his verbally dexterous, disdainful niece (Kristen Johnston). When Hero's intended, Claudio (Lorenzo Pisoni), accuses her of infidelity, Leonato's love for his daughter turns to cold gray ash. It is almost unbearable to watch his Lear-like wrath fall on its passive, defenseless victim. But Waterston lends pathos to Leonato's disgust, transforming Shakespeare's rage into an aria about the shattering of a dream. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/26/04.) (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

PICON PIE
Barbara Minkus stars in a tour of the life and music of Molly Picon, the star of Yiddish theatre and film who went on to Broadway and Hollywood. Although her offstage life was touched by tragedy—a miscarriage, Alzheimer's disease—Picon is most remembered for her good cheer, which she displayed in the 1937 film "Yiddle Mitn Fiddle," in which she sings, "Yiddle, fiddle, shmiddle, ho! / The world's a happy place!" from the top of a hay cart. Directed by Pamela Hall. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

ADDRESS UNKNOWN
Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BOMBAY DREAMS
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.

THE BOY FROM OZ
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

BRIDGE AND TUNNEL
45 Bleecker Street Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. (Closes Aug. 15.)

BUG
Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

FROZEN
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.

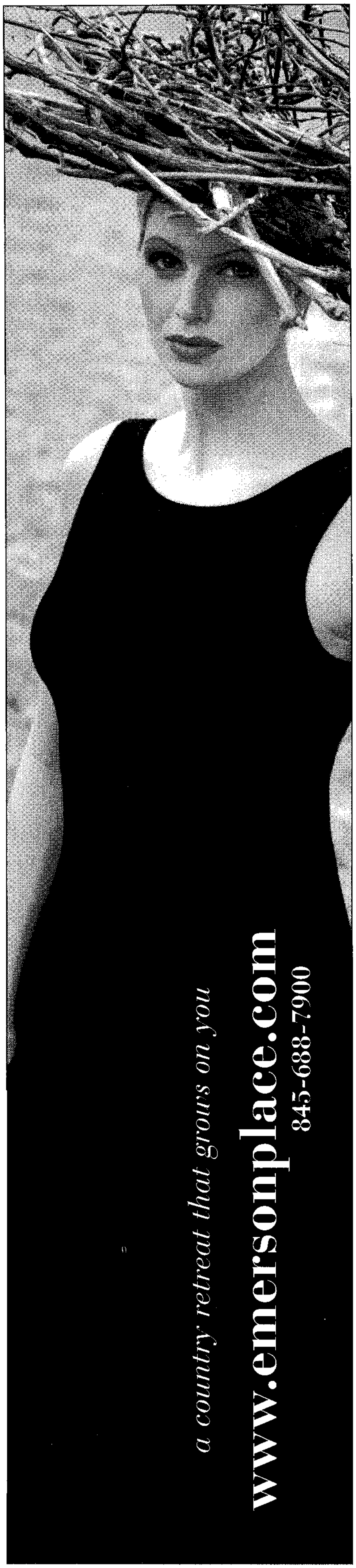
GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. (Closes Aug. 22.)

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.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MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.

WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance played on Broadway for a year and has toured five continents. In honor of the show's tenth anniversary, the Shubert hosts a six-week run, with fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Aug. 3, Aug. 5-6, Aug. 10, Aug. 12-13, and Aug. 17 at 8; Aug. 4, Aug. 7, Aug. 11, and Aug. 14 at 2 and 8; and Aug. 8 and Aug. 15 at 3. Through Aug. 29.)

BOCCATANGO
The Argentine dancer Julio Bocca, a longtime principal with American Ballet Theatre, brings members of his own company, Ballet Argentino, to the Joyce for two weeks of tango. The show is a star vehicle with an unorthodox gender ratio (six men and two women) and some unusual pairings: man and man, man and table, man and ladder. As if to compete for attention, the women sometimes go topless. With the eight-piece orchestra Octango and two impassioned vocalists. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Aug. 4-6 and Aug. 11-13 at 8 and Aug. 7 and Aug. 14 at 2 and 8.)

"IF TRANE WUZ HERE"
The tap dancer Savion Glover, the spoken-word performer Reg E. Gaines, and the saxophonist Matana Roberts explore John Coltrane's legacy. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Aug. 6 at 9.)

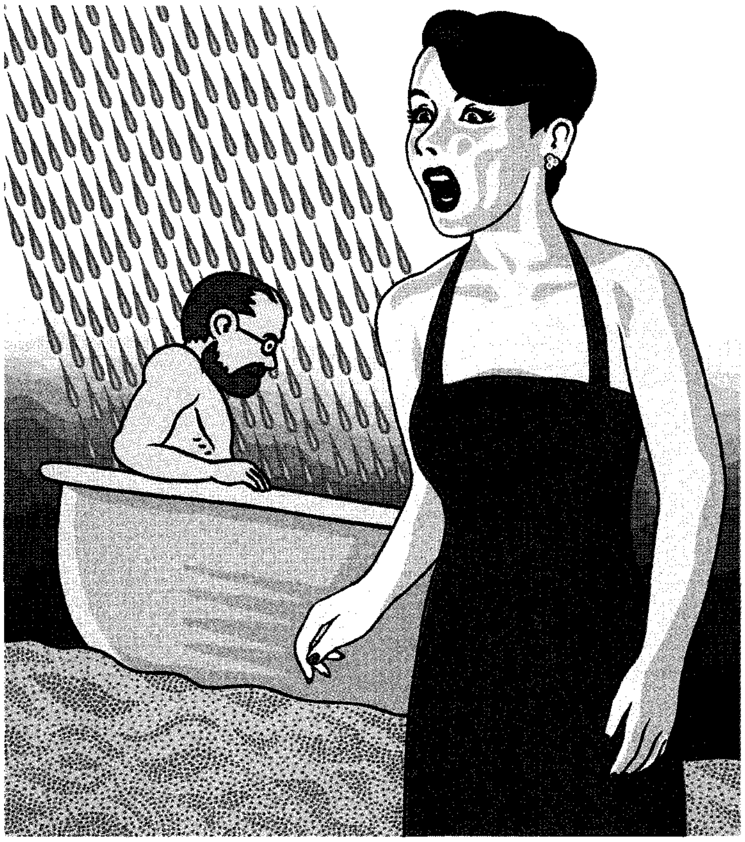
"LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS"
The annual festival of free outdoor performances begins Aug. 10. Highlights of the first weeks include appearances by Soweto Street Beat, an Atlanta-based troupe that mixes South African street moves with traditional dances from the Zulu, Sotho, Swazi, and Xhosa cultures, on Aug. 13; Na Lei Hula I Ka Wekiu, a fifty-one-member company from San Francisco that performs hula and other Hawaiian dances, on Aug. 15-16; and the athletic, contemporary groups Battleworks Dance Company and Parsons Dance Company, on Aug. 16 and Aug. 17, respectively. (For more information about performances, venues, and times, see www.lincolncenter.org or call 212-875-5766. Through Aug. 30.)

INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL—NYC
The festival's last two weeks include performances by Michael Minery's Tapaholics!, Kuei-chuan's Assembly Dance Theatre of Taiwan, and the En l'Air Aerial Dance Company, who dance in midair. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. For a full list of performers and show times, see www.internationaldancefestival.org.)

"SUMMER IN THE SQUARE"
As part of its seventh annual free celebration of dance, Jonathan Hollander's Battery Dance Company presents "Notebooks," a piece inspired by the paintings of Georges Braque, with a score by Frank Carlberg. (Union Square Park, 16th St. entrance. Aug. 11 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
The experimental company of the City Ballet principal Peter Boal travels to the Pillow Aug. 4-8. Joined by Wendy Whelan, Sean Suozzi, and Benjamin Millepied, Boal presents works by Balanchine, William Forsythe, Marco Goecke, and Christopher Wheeldon. The sinewy Whelan dances with Boal in Forsythe's jokey pas de deux from "Herman Schmerman," Sean Suozzi is riveting in the Goecke solo "Mopey," and Millepied appears with Boal and Whelan in a trio from Wheeldon's "Mesmerics." In the smaller Doris Duke Theatre, a cast of Broadway dancers perform "Jazz on Jazz," a collection of new work by Matt Mattox and Chet Walker, backed by a live jazz quartet. The following week, Mark Morris Dance Group returns to the main stage with two ensemble pieces: "A Lake" (1991), set to a Haydn horn concerto, and "V," danced to a live performance of Schumann's Quintet in E-Flat for Piano and Strings, Op. 44. Morris's light side is represented by "My Party" (1984) and "A Spell" (1993), a bawdy trio performed by a winged Cupid and two lovers. At the Doris Duke, dancers from New Zealand's Black Grace—most of them Pacific Islanders—perform rhythmic, high-energy works inspired by Maori traditions and Samoan slap dance and tattoo rituals and choreographed by Neil Ieremia. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0749. Boal & Company: Aug. 4-6 at 8, Aug. 7 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 8 at 2. "Jazz on Jazz": Aug. 5 at 8:15, Aug. 6-7 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 8 at 5. Mark Morris Dance Group: Aug. 10-13 at 8, Aug. 14 at 2 and 8, and Aug. 15 at 2. Black Grace: Aug. 12-13 at 8:15, Aug. 14 at 2:15 and 8:15, and Aug. 15 at 5.)


"Doctor Tedrow's Last Breath," part of the Ice Factory '04 festival.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!"
Aug. 5 at 7:30: The **Loser's Lounge** performs a set of vintage Bond-movie themes, prior to a screening of the 1965 Sean Connery vehicle "Thunderball." Aug. 6 at 7:30: A night of rock *en español* with **Andrea Echeverri**, the front woman for the funky group Los Aterciopelados, and **Volumen Cero**, a Miami-based band with a nineteen-eighties Manchester attitude. Aug. 7 from 2 to 9: An African festival with the Congolese singer **Kanda Bongo Man** and his high-octane soukous. The show includes the euphoric New York-based Guinean performer **Sidiki**, who, after losing the use of his legs as a teen-ager, taught himself to dance on his hands. He spent years with the traditional West African music-and-dance group Les Merveilles de Guinea, and he recently completed his first album, on which he sings, backed by a sixteen-piece band. Aug. 10: **The Bob Marley Roots Rock Reggae Festival.** (Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-855-7882, ext. 45.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Aug. 7 at 3: The vocalist **Caron Wheeler** (Soul II Soul), the guitarist **Vernon Reid**, the singer **Corey Glover** (both of Living Colour), and other members of the Black Rock Coalition perform selections from Stevie Wonder's 1976 album, "Songs in the Key of Life." Aug. 10 at 6:30: The inimitable country-rock songwriter **Lucinda Williams.** With **Jim White.** Aug. 15 at 3: **Nas**, one of the kings of New York rap. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.)

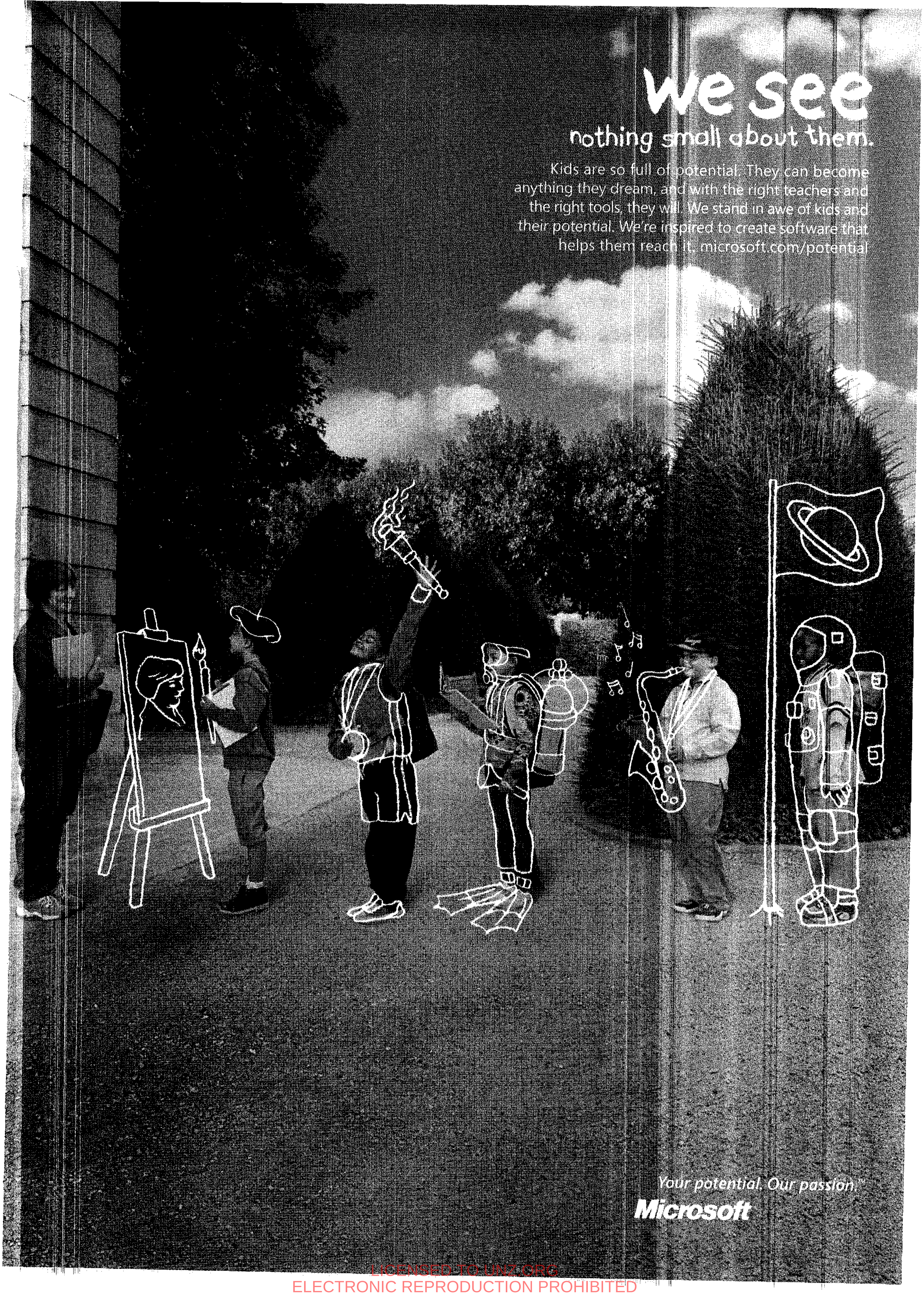
MODEST MOUSE
In its decadelong history, this indie-rock group from Seattle has released half a dozen EPs and albums, none of which went much further than college dorm rooms. But this summer, its new album, "Good News for People Who Love Bad News," has become a surprise hit. The band, which was originally scheduled to play New York as part of the ill-fated Lollapalooza tour, brings its awkward but lovable vocals to town for a headlining show at the Hammerstein Ballroom. (Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Aug. 8 at 6.)

"LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS"
Aug. 10 at 8: On a good night he can convince you that no one should ever raise a tenor saxophone to his lips but him; on a bad night, well, he's still **Sonny Rollins.** Whether swaggering through a Bing Crosby hit or jazzed-up calypso, Rollins takes raw material and transforms it with sublime improvisation. Aug. 14 at 7:15: Jazzmobile, which was formed by the indefatigable **Dr. Billy Taylor**, celebrates its fortieth anniversary. The program has featured most of the prominent jazz players of the past four decades in workshops, educational programs, and free summer concerts. It helps keep the music alive and, in a culture that tends to slight it, in full view. Taylor, the **Heath Brothers**, and the trumpeter **Roy Hargrove** will perform. Aug. 19-21: The annual **Roots of American Music Festival.** (For more information, call 212-875-5766.)

"EISTEDDFOD NEW YORK"
This three-day event features some two dozen singers, guitarists, pipers, and banjo pickers. For more information, visit www.eisteddfod-ny.org. (Polytechnic University, Metrotech Center, downtown Brooklyn. 718-426-8555. Aug. 13-15.)

"LITTLE STEVEN'S INTERNATIONAL UNDERGROUND GARAGE FESTIVAL"
With Iggy Pop and the Stooges, the Strokes, the New York Dolls, Bo Diddley, the Raveonettes, and others (see This Week). (Randall's Island. 212-307-7171. Aug. 14, starting at 11 A.M.)

"JOE'S PUB IN THE PARK"
Aug. 16 at 7: The seductive Brazilian singer **Bebel Gilberto** inaugurates a new outdoor series. Aug.



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17 at 7: The singer-songwriters **Suzanne Vega** and **Jonatha Brooke.** (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. 212-239-6200.)

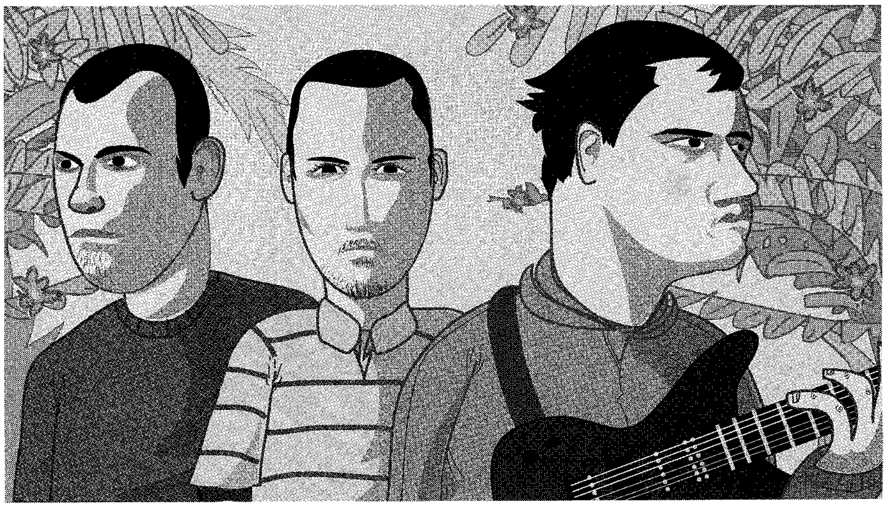
CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 4: A night of reggae with the British-born Rastafarian **Maxi Priest.** Aug. 6: The flat-picking guitar master **Doc Watson.** Aug. 9-10: **Bond,** the Spice Girls of the classical-music world, consists of four gorgeous young women sawing away on string instruments. On their latest album, "Classified," they competently spin out some surface elements of classical music (Vivaldian filigree, Brahms's "Hungarian Dance," a theme from "Swan Lake") and take on vintage disco.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 13-14: The **Mutual Admiration Society** unites Glen Phillips, formerly of the alternative-rock group Toad the Wet Sprocket, with members of the young bluegrass band Nickel Creek—Chris Thile and Sara and Sean Watkins. They're joined on this tour by John Paul Jones, of Led Zeppelin fame, and Pete Thomas, of Elvis Costello and the Attractions. Aug. 15: Abandon all convention ye who enter here, as the Brooklyn noise rockers **Black Dice** and the folksy experimentalists **Animal Collective** ply their sonic wares.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 4: The Canadian band **Kittie** shatters two stereotypes—that all of our northern neighbors are sweet and that heavy metal is a boys-only genre. The all-girl group has a gravel-voiced, bruised-knuckled ferocity.


At the Hammerstein Ballroom, the Seattle-based indie-rock group Modest Mouse.

MAXIMILIAN BODE

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 7: **Tres Chicas** are the North Carolina-based singers Caitlin Cary, Tonya Lamm, and Lynn Blakey. They like to cover George Jones, Lucinda Williams, and Loretta Lynn, as well as sing windswept originals. Aug. 13: The post-punk princess **Tanya Donelly.**

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—The **Steep Canyon Rangers,** rising heartthrobs on the North Carolina bluegrass scene, stop by on Aug. 12.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Aug. 5: **Allison Moorer,** Shelby Lynne's kid sister, was once a budding Nashville star. But she abandoned her big recording contract, left Music City, and released her latest album, "The Duel," on the niche label Sugar Hill. "The Duel" takes Moorer straight into the land of vintage Neil Young, with a raw Southern-rock sound. Expect her to cut loose here—her backing band includes Dan Baird, the guitarist and vocalist who led the Georgia Satellites.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Aug 12: The world-class (and lamentably obscure) vocal improviser **Catherine Jauniaux** makes a rare foray from her home in the South of France to the Lower East Side. Jauniaux can appear vulnerable one moment, lightly humming a sad lullaby, and the next moment she's a powerhouse, exploding into a wordless frenzy. Unlike some evenings of improv, when musicians meet for the first time onstage, the band backing her here, Marc Ribot on guitar, Ted Reichman on accordion, and Christine Bard on drums, is deeply familiar with her unique vocal odysseys.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Aug. 8: The Brazilian composer and performer **João Bosco** is a post-bossa-nova giant in his own country. Aug. 10-15: Even the best work of the Brazilian songsmith **Ivan Lins** can't make you forget Antonio Carlos Jobim, but Lins's pleasant way with suggestive harmonies and buoyant rhythms cuts through the slickness of his pop-fusion presentation.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jazz singers are a hardy bunch. Two vocal legends, **Chris Connor** and **Anita O'Day,** exhibit their fortitude. Connor (Aug. 5-6) put her stamp on the fifties through a stint with Stan Kenton and a series of well-received solo albums. O'Day (Aug. 7-8) also put in time with Kenton but had already established herself during the Swing Era with Gene Krupa's band. The vicissitudes of show business have touched both women, but to paraphrase the old song, they're still here. Aug. 10-11: The imaginative young Japanese pianist **Hiromi.** Aug. 12-15: Don Byron's **Music for Six Musicians** band.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 4-7: The unclassifiable **Bob Brookmeyer,** who is equally accomplished as a composer, an arranger, and a valve trombonist, makes a rare appearance with a small group comprised of new-jazz players half his age: the guitarist **Brad Shepik,** the bassist **Drew Gress,** and the drummer **John Hollenbeck.** Aug. 11-15: **David Sanchez's** new album, "Coral," finds the saxophonist in a lush orchestral setting, interpreting the work of Latin composers. Onstage here with a spare quartet, he'll carry the day with his glowing tone and radiant improvisations.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—The drummer **Rashied Ali** used to tangle with John Coltrane in high-powered duets. On Aug. 18 he takes on the saxophonist **Sonny Fortune.** Aug. 20-21: It's always a good thing to find **Carl Allen,** a model of supportive drumming, on a bandstand. The perennial sideman leads his own group here.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Aug. 8: The **Al Foster** quartet. Foster, a much valued drummer, has brought rhythmic sparkle to the bands of Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, and Joe Henderson, among many others. He's enlisted the Israeli saxophonist **Eli DiGibri,** the pianist **Kevin Hays,** and the bassist **Doug Weiss** here. Aug. 10-15: Another in-demand drummer, **Joey Baron,** leads a guitar-heavy quartet featuring **Steve Cardenas** and **Brad Shepik.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—Neue Sachlichkeit, or New Objectivity—a style that flourished among avant-garde German painters between the wars—depicted a society in moral and economic free fall in ways that were in fact wildly subjective, pessimistic, and exuberant. In **"German Drawings and Prints from the Weimar Republic (1919-33),"** George Grosz, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and their contemporaries record a Berlin filled with demobbed and demoralized soldiers, rapacious industrialists, and femmes fatales. The nervous lines of their etchings, lithographs, and drawings evince an anguished comedy. Through Oct. 3. ♦ **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Painters of Reality: The Legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy."** Through Aug. 15. ♦ **"Ruhlmann: Genius of Art Deco."** Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"August Sander: People of the Twentieth Century, a Photographic Portrait of Germany."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Childe Hassam, American Impressionist."** Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective."** Through Sept. 27. ♦ **"Tall Buildings"** documents twenty-five skyscrapers around the world with photographs, models, diagrams, and blueprints. Through Sept. 27. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things."** The room of four "Bird" sculptures unfolds a staggering range of stylistic genius. Certain pieces are epiphanic. The all-pedestal "Caryatid" (1914 and 1926) remains radical for its union of art and furniture, and "Mlle. Pogany II" (1919) is a sublime sculpture from a dozen or so viewpoints. Through Sept. 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)— **"Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke and Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha"** and **"Ed Ruscha and Photography."** Through Sept. 26. ♦ **"Ana Mendieta: Earth Body Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985"** is a teeming retrospective of photographs, films, paintings, drawings, and objects from the brief career of the Cuban-born artist. Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Evidence of Impact: Art and Photography 1963-1978"** samples avant-garde works from the period just before photography shed its marginal status among the arts. Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—A de-facto borough biennial, the sprawling survey "Open

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Words on Music

Borders' Music expert Erika Grande says:
"With an ensemble of first-rate Cuban and Brazilian musicians and superb arrangements, Omara's second solo album is a mellow journey back to an earlier era, sung with expressive depth and style by the kind of elegant diva they just don't make anymore."

Flor de Amor
omara
portuondo

"The queen of the Buena Vista Social Club returns... as vocally compelling as ever...with a collection of 'musical love letters' that overwhelms the senses, like a stroll through a grove of gardenias... recalling an atmosphere of languid nights on the Havana club scene of the pre-Castro era...a lush soundscape tinged with melancholy but accented with hope." — ***Chicago Sun Times***

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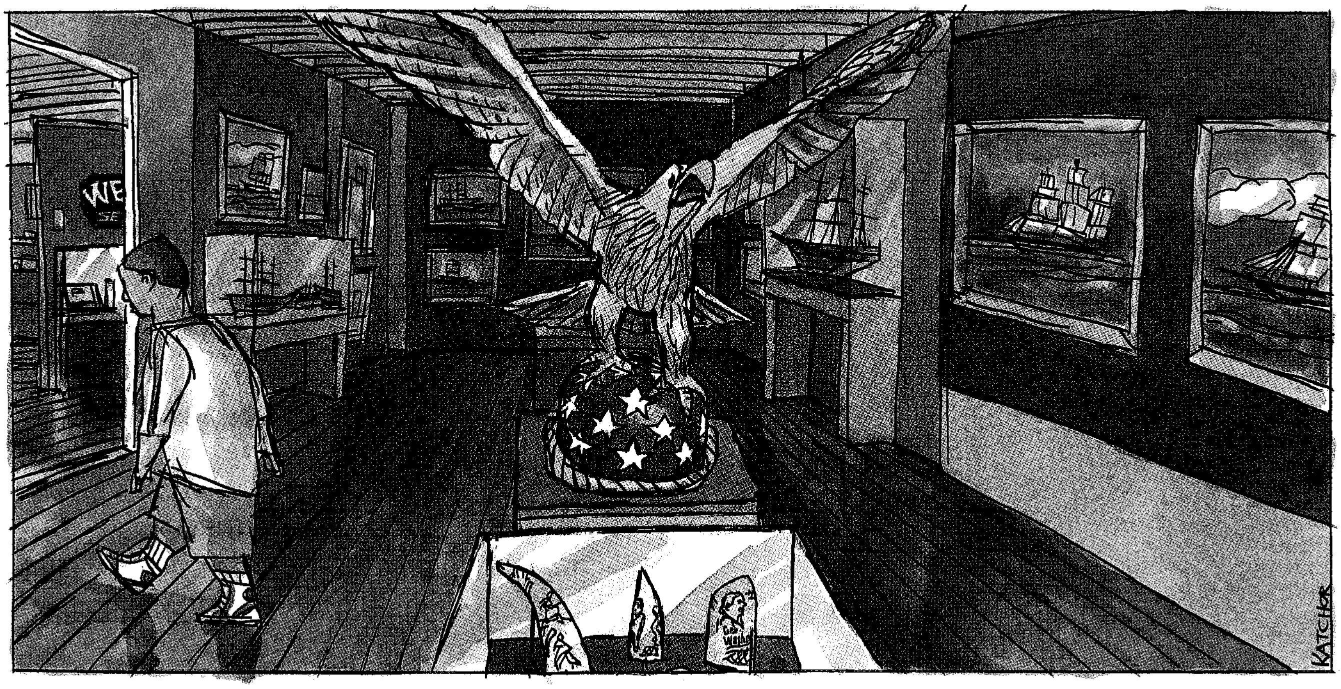
House: Working in Brooklyn" has three hundred works by two hundred artists in every conceivable medium. Inevitably, the show is a bit of a hodgepodge, with a surprising emphasis on easel painting. But the eclecticism generates ample electricity—the show is likely to become a landmark. Through Aug. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"The Unfinished Print"** includes incomplete images by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Piranesi, Rodin, and Degas, among others. Through Aug. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth."** Through Sept. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
12 Fulton St., at Water St. (212-748-8600)—This institution's exhibitions now stretch over nine ships, four storefronts, and a twisty warren of galleries above a new reception space. The show at the latest gallery to open along the Schermerhorn Row labyrinth is **"Nieuw Amsterdam: Dutch New York as Represented in the Archaeological Collections of South Street Seaport Museum."** It includes revealing relics of china and metal, raised from sites like the seventeenth-century Haie/Van Tienhoven privies, outhouses of the city's Dutch settlers—the domestic landfills of another age. Another new exhibit, **"Soundings: Treasures of the Collections of South Street Seaport Museum,"** gathers scrimshaw carvings of technological marvels—the Atlantic Telegraph Station, for instance—model ships built from chicken bones, and the detritus of city businesses, including "A New System of Mercantile Arithmetic: Adapted to the United States and Its Domestic and Foreign Relations with Forms of Accounts and Other Writings Usually Occurring in Trade," the Windows XP of its day. (Open daily, 10 to 5.)



Two new exhibits of historical curiosities and archeological relics have opened in the galleries of the South Street Seaport Museum.

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Figuratively,"** a showcase of the museum's three artists-in-residence for 2003-04, focusses on active bodies, though abstraction and metaphor are addressed as well. Dave McKenzie presents video and sculpture, including the wistfully satirical "We Shall Overcome," in which Louis Armstrong's rendition of the anthem backs footage of the artist wearing a rubber Bill Clinton mask and glad-handing on 125th Street. William Villalongo's paintings on velvet and silhouettes made of cut velour paper mix strange bedfellows like Ovidian nymphs and Michael Jackson, while Wangechi Mutu's painted collages present sinuous female forms writhing under such suggestive titles as "Magnificent Monkey-Ass Lies" and "One Hundred Lavish Months of Bushwhack." Through Sept. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

DIANA KINGSLEY
"Isle of August" is a collection of videos and photographs of a well-heeled summer world. A tennis player, seen only from behind and the waist down, is oblivious to her flapping, untied shoelaces in "Court Disaster." A stack of gilt-edged china plates teeters precariously in "Fair field full of dainty," and a moth lured by a yellow flower bumps endlessly against a window in "buster." But nothing smashes, no one falls, and the over-all effect is cute rather than menacing. Through Aug. 5. (Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470.)

JOAN MITCHELL
The colorful, exuberant Expressionism of Mitchell's painted canvases is evident in lithographs made in 1981 and in 1992, the year she died. Drawing with tusche or litho-crayon directly on aluminum plates (one plate for every color; each print here averages around four), Mitchell created large, abstract compositions with thick, gestural lines conjuring trees, flowers, and riverbanks. Two versions of "Bedford" cover the paper with thickets of colorful markings, while the "Sunflower" diptychs include arabesque lines that mimic the characters in Oriental script. Mitchell challenges notions of the print as small and precious by offering works on paper that are ambitious and expansive. Through Oct. 2. (Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 212-397-0669.)

GEORGE SCHNEEMAN
Collaborating with the downtown coterie that has come to be known as the second generation of New York School poets—Anne Waldman, Ted Berrigan, Ron Padgett, Bill Berkson, Peter Schjeldahl—the painter George Schneeman has acted not as an illustrator but as another voice whose articulations happen to be visual. "George Schneeman: Painter Among Poets" is a sampler of his witty, sometimes lyrical work, spanning four decades. Mixing painting with collage, Schneeman recalibrates snatches of poems such as Padgett's "I think it's / time the / Statue of / Liberty turned / and faced the / nation"; a giant frayed Teddy bear looms over Liberty's head. Through Sept. 11. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.)

"REFLECTING THE MIRROR"
At the entrance to the galleries, there is a stencilled black-and-silver wall text by the veteran Conceptualist Lawrence Weiner: "A mirror scratched at the brief point twixt silver & black where the image turns to return to sender." Following that cue, the other work in the show—including pieces by Gabriel Orozco, Gerhard Richter, Jeff Koons, Robert Smithson, and others—performs perceptual switcheroos. Jeppe Hein's mysteriously rolling silver balls clank on the floor amid fun-house sculptures by Dan Graham, Olafur Eliasson, Daniel Buren, and Juan Muñoz. Quieter entries include self-portraits by Francesca Woodman and Lothar Baumgarten's snail-and-light slide show. Through Aug. 27. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROBERT PRUITT
Images of lily-white America by Norman Rockwell are reconfigured with wicked acuity in Pruitt's digitally manipulated prints on canvas. A Ku Klux Klan hood is inserted into Rockwell's illustration of a woman sewing an American flag, while the nubile innocent of "Girl at Mirror" holds in her lap a magazine with Lil John and the East Side Boyz on the cover. Prop guns embellished with rhinestones or Nike logos are ham-fisted efforts at social critique. But a wall-mounted telephone that plays recorded slave narratives through the handset is a genuinely moving work of political art. Through Aug. 13. (Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-5937.)

"DELIVER US FROM EVIL"
An inspired gathering of works on paper by Honoré Daumier; Dr. Lakra, a contemporary Mexican tattoo artist; the outsiderish San Franciscan Keegan McHargue; and the bad boys R. Crumb and Jake & Dinos Chapman. Daumier's sendups of the nineteenth-

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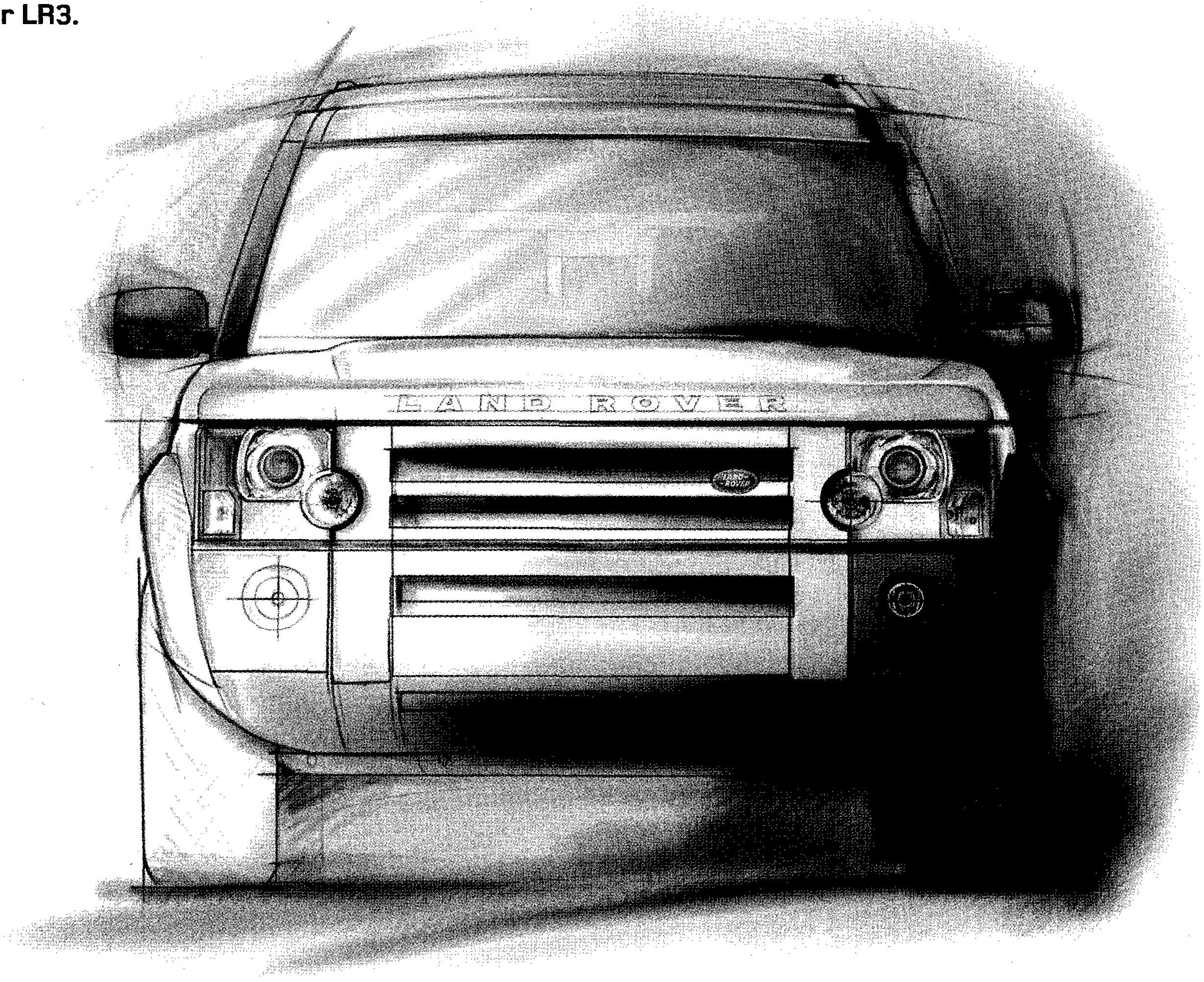

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LAND-ROVER

A hundred and fifty of August Sander's portraits of Germans from his near-comprehensive "People of the Twentieth Century" project—including this group photograph of circus performers—are on view at the Metropolitan Museum through September 19.

century Parisian bourgeoisie acquire a sinister aura when viewed alongside abject scenes from the Chapmans' "My Giant Coloring Book," vintage posters of Mexican pinups with tattoos drawn on by *el doctor*, and fragments of Crumb's virtuosic, scatological comics. A scratchy seven-foot drawing by McHargue (who was born in 1983) anchors one corner of the gallery. The French *maître* is absent from the center of the room, where a collection of mundane objects have been transformed: plastic drinking cups etched with intricate designs by Dr. Lakra, wooden spools on which Crumb has inked portraits of friends, and an "Unhappy Meal" from the brothers Chapman, made by covering a McDonald's container in Gothic decoration. Through Aug. 20. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

"I AM THE WALRUS"
Contemporary clown imagery, including a recent Cindy Sherman self-portrait and videos by Paul McCarthy and Bruce Nauman. A jester recites from "Richard III" in a video by John Bock. Christopher Mako's black-and-white photograph of Andy Warhol wearing a clown nose is a masterwork of uncomfortable ambiguity, a reminder that Warhol laid the groundwork for many subsequent renditions of clown craft. Through Aug. 27. (Cheim and Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

Short List

"GROUND-FIELD-SURFACE"
Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St.
212-366-4774. Through Aug. 20.

"HAPPY ART FOR A SAD WORLD"
Spike, 547 W. 20th St.
212-627-4100. Through Aug. 31.

PHOTOGRAPHY

MARIANA COOK
Ten large black-and-white abstractions that show the influence of Cook's teacher Ansel Adams: swimming-pool tiles quivering underwater, a striped vase shot from above, flowers wrapped in plastic. In Cook's hands, an eggplant could be a volcanic island seen from a plane. Through Aug. 20. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave. 212-744-7400.)

CHIP HOOPER
Using a large-format view camera, Hooper takes extraordinarily detailed photographs of the interaction between water and light along the Pacific Ocean. In some pictures the waves roil and fog blocks out the sun, creating a virtually unified field of gray. In others, the sun on still water makes a block of light that falls in a hard line into the ocean. Through Sept. 18. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

JOSHUA LUTZ
In his first solo show, Lutz takes the "New Topographics" of Adams, Shore, and Sternfeld into the current era of urban sprawl. In one picture, mountains in the distance are squeezed out of view by the minarets, domes, and neon camels of Las Vegas's Sahara Casino. Crossed wires, scraggly trees, and a sad swing set add to the claustrophobia of a small-town Pennsylvania subdivision. Some wide-open spaces are included—an abandoned palm-tree farm in California, a huge, bizarrely fenced-in cement foundation in Westchester County—but the extra room to roam is presented with a relentless lack of sentimentality. Through Aug. 7. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE
Fifteen collotype plates from the famous edition of "Animal Locomotion," published in 1887. The plates contain between twelve and thirty-six images produced with a technique that, Muybridge claimed, made it possible to analyze movement in a manner unavailable to the naked eye. The ones shown here were chosen because they depict athletic events associated with the Olympics. Men run to and away from Muybridge's camera, vault over a pole, jump, and throw punches. The lone woman on view, in a toga (the men are naked), bounces a ball on her tennis racquet, drops it, then coyly picks it up. Through Aug. 20. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY / ASIA SOCIETY
A show of recent photography and videos from China, "Between Past and Future," fills both museums with a hundred and thirty works by sixty young artists. The incredibly fast transformation of Chinese society is the central theme. Riffing on traditional Chinese scroll painting, Wang Qingsong places an officially denounced art critic at the center of his updating of the "Night Revels of Lao Li," from the tenth century. Wang Wei backlights a long line of color transparencies placed on the floor, portraits of himself underwater, forcing the viewer to walk across his face. Liu Zheng's black-and-white portraits of women mourning at a country funeral and masked revellers at a New Year's Eve party elegantly evoke the stark contrasts in the new China. Sze Tsung Leong's large color prints showing demolished traditional architecture are sad re-

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flections on the country's manic race to build. Through Sept. 4. (International Center of Photography, 1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000; Asia Society, 725 Park Ave. 212-288-6400.)

"POOL PARTY"

Nearly forty pictures by as many artists, gathered together through the slight, but surprisingly rich, conceit of swimming-pool specificity. Anthony Goicolea's big (fifty-by-seventy-inch) digitally manipulated photomontage of a group of boys in and out of the water (all of them himself, looking as though he were sixteen years old) anchors the show at one end of the gallery. At the other end, Slim Aarons's famous image, from 1970, of socialites enjoying cocktails by the pool at the Kaufman house, in Los Angeles, provides a cultural counterpoint. Mary Ellen Mark's portrait of a sullen girl smoking in a back-yard kiddie pool hangs next to Larry Sultan's picture from an outdoor pornographic film set in California. Diane Arbus's louche swingers at a singles club (1970) share a sensibility with Lauren Greenfield's tough-looking spring-break bikini contestant (2000). Less sexually fraught images include O. Winston Link's picture of a train hurtling past a public swimming pool and a bathing-suit fashion shot by Louise Dahl-Wolfe. Through Aug. 20. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

"WILD FLOWERS"

The flowers in this group show inhabit urban and emotional wilds, as in Joel Meyerowitz's photograph of a man carrying two potted plants down Forty-second Street and Gus Powell's picture of a man eating alone in a diner, at a table decorated with a solitary rose. Other photographers' flowers—the floral patterns in the dresses worn in Alec Soth's "Mother and Daughter," for instance—wouldn't attract a single bee. A pair of exquisite George Tice prints and six spectacularly crisp floral studies by Chad Kleitsch provide a more lyrical approach. Through Aug. 20. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S

The people who move the pictures and work the phones get a chance to shine as the auction house mounts an exhibition and sale of paintings, photographs, sculptures, ceramics, and installation art by more than sixty members of its staff. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000. Aug. 3-24.)

SWANN

Aug. 4 at 2: A sale of vintage posters. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

Aug. 6-7 at 8: Katia and Marielle Labèque join Louis Langrée and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in an all-Mozart evening that features the Concerto for Two Pianos in E-Flat Major and the Symphonies Nos. 34 and 36 ("Linz"). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 7-8 at 5: Rachel Podger leads the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in two programs featuring Bach's Brandenburg Concertos along with works by Telemann, Heinichen, and Benda. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Aug. 10, Aug. 12, and Aug. 14 at 8: **"Così Fan Tutte,"** the most intimate and emotionally complex of Mozart's operas, is the kind of piece that sprouts a thorn for every rose—perfect for the psychologically penetrating style of Jonathan Miller, who makes his festival début directing the production he fashioned for the Royal Opera and for BAM. The cast includes Susan Gritton, Krisztina Szabó, Nathan Gunn, and Andrew Shore, also making their débuts; Bernard Labadie conducts his renowned Montreal band, Les Violons du Roy. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St.) ♦ Aug. 10-12 at 10:30: Pieter Wispelwey plays Bach's Six Suites for Solo Cello at the Kaplan Penthouse. (See This Week.) ♦ Aug. 11 at 8: Christian Zacharias plays with and conducts the festival orchestra in music by Mozart (the Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat Major) and Schubert (the Symphony No. 6). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 13-14 at 8: Wispelwey joins Langrée and the festival orchestra in Schumann's elegiac Cello Concerto, part of a dark-hued program that also includes works by Haydn and Mozart (the Symphony No. 40 in G Minor). (Avery Fisher Hall.) (212-721-6500. For a complete schedule, see www.lincolncenter.org.)

TABLES FOR TWO

5 NINTH

(5 Ninth Ave. 212-929-9460)— Zakary Pelaccio, formerly the chef at Williamsburg's super-eclectic and now defunct Chicken Bone Café, has worked his way into the meatpacking district, the land of moules frites and town cars. In an attempt to rise above the touristy mayhem at the cobblestone intersection of Gansevoort Street, Little West Twelfth Street, and Ninth Avenue, he now commands an entire town house. The interior is mid-nineteenth-century minimalist cool—stripped to the original bricks and beams but with floating concrete staircases.

Though Pelaccio is a big greenmarket shopper and scours the outer boroughs for his ingredients, mainly he's a fiend for pig. He serves a memorable appetizer of braised pork belly with a rhubarb glaze, tosses pork belly on top of a clay pot of frog's legs, and even mixes it into a jellyfish salad. He takes huge slabs of bacon and stacks them with yellow and red beets, and adds prosciutto to monkfish. There's even something suggestive of the bacon pan about the way he presents his wonderful chocolate ganache with sour cherries in a miniature cast-iron skillet. He calls his cooking New York Modern. The noodle dishes announce their origins (the garganelli with baby lamb hearts is Italian; the coconut broth with lobster and mysteriously medicinal galangal flowers is Malay), but most of his concoctions, however fearless, feel so natural that there's no pressure to puzzle out what they mean. The low-key sign out front (there's just a simple brass "5" above the door knocker) hasn't kept the place from being overrun. At the parlor-floor bar on any given weeknight you can overhear someone in Wall Street attire saying things like "You're sure this is your most expensive Cognac?" (Open daily for dinner. Entrées $22-$28.)

—*Owen Phillips*

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA

This company's productions may not be lavish, but the conductor, Vincent La Selva, has a more natural command of Italianate style than almost any other conductor in New York—and the performances are free. La Selva begins his series with **"Turandot"** and **"Rigoletto."** (Central Park Bandshell, mid-Park at 72nd St. Aug. 11 and Aug. 19 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC

Aug. 12-14 at 7:30 and Aug. 15 at 4: Jeffrey Swann completes his survey of the complete Beethoven piano sonatas in four separate concerts; among the selections are the "Appassionata" and "Moonlight" Sonatas. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For a full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

OUT OF TOWN

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

Some highlights from the festival's final weeks. Aug. 3-5 at 8:30: The chanteuse Karen Mason performs a cabaret program, "Takin' a Chance on Love." ♦ Aug. 8 at 4:30: The venerated piano pedagogue Russell Sherman offers an all-Liszt recital (including selections from the "Transcendental Études"). ♦ Aug. 12 at 7:30 and Aug. 13 at 8: In two programs, the young Caramoor Virtuosi delve into the treasury of Czech music, including Dvořák's Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola, Martinů's "Madrigals" for violin and viola, and Smetana's Piano Trio in G Minor. ♦ Aug. 14 at 8: The festival finale, an all-Czech program with Peter Oundjian conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's in music by Janáček, Smetana, Dvořák (the Cello Concerto, with Carter Brey), and Kryštof Mařatka (a world-première commission). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Aug. 4 at 7:30: Music by Dvořák (including the Piano Quintet) surrounds "Cool Fire," a work for flute and piano quintet by Paul Moravec, the winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Music. The violinist Ani Kavafian and the pianist Anna Polonsky are among the musicians. ♦ Aug. 8 at 6:30: An all-Brahms program (including the Sextet for Strings in G Major), performed by the flutist Marya Martin, the cellist Nicholas Tzavaras, and others. (Presbyterian Church, Bridgehampton, N.Y. 631-537-6368. For a full schedule, see www.bcmf.org.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

Aug. 5 and Aug. 13 at 8, Aug. 7 at 1:30, and Aug. 10 and Aug. 16 at 2: Richard Rodney Bennett's **"The Mines of Sulphur,"** a murder mystery set in a country house in eighteenth-century England, features Caroline Worra, Beth Clayton, Brandon Jovanovich, and James Maddalena; Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ Aug. 6 at 8 and Aug. 9 and Aug. 15 at 2: Handel's **"Imeneo,"** with John Tessier, Michael Maniaci, Amanda Pabyan, and Craig Phillips; William Lacey. ♦ Aug. 7 and Aug. 14 at 8 and Aug. 17 at 2: A winning production of Puccini's **"La Fanciulla del West"** features Emily Pulley, Roger Honeywell, and Earle Patriarco; Robertson. ♦ Aug. 8 at 2, Aug. 12 at 8, and Aug. 14 at 1:30: Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Patience,"** with Sarah Coburn, Jeffrey Lentz, Kevin Burdette, and Joyce Castle; Andrew Bisantz. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Highlights from two weeks at the Yale School of Music's summer outpost. Aug. 6 at 8: The sylphlike soprano Susan Narucki joins the pianists Boris Berman and Peter Frankl, among others, for music by Mozart and Ives (including a selection of songs). ♦ Aug. 7 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet performs an all-Beethoven program (including the Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132). (Routes 44 and 272, Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE

Dmitri Shostakovich is the big man on campus at Bard this summer. Aug. 6-7 at 8: The final performances of **"The Nose,"** Shostakovich's crazily ambitious first opera, based on the Gogol story. Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra; Francesca Zambello directs. ♦ Aug. 12 at 8, Aug. 13 at 5, Aug. 14 at noon and 4, and Aug. 15 at 2 and 7: Zambello also directs **"Moscow: Cherry Tree Towers"** (1959), the composer's only musical, a farce about a group of loyal Soviet workers desperate to gain entry into a spanking-new housing development. Joshua Winograde, Marie Lenormand, and Peter Kazaras are in the cast; Sergei Dreznin is the musical director. ♦ Aug. 13 at 8:30: The densely packed first weekend of the Bard Music Festival, devoted to the music of Shostakovich and his colleagues, successors, and mentors, begins with "The Man and His Work," a chamber program featuring such pieces as the Piano Trio No. 2 in E Minor and the String Quartet No. 11 in F Minor. Through Nov. 7. (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. For a full schedule, see www.summerscape.bard.edu.)

TANGLEWOOD

Highlights from two weeks of concerts. Aug. 6 at 8:30: Christoph von Dohnányi conducts the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Schumann's Second Symphony and Brahms's Second Piano Concerto (with Yefim Bronfman). ♦ Aug. 7 at 8:30: Yo-Yo Ma, still on the Silk Road tour, gathers his world-music mavens for a program with the B.S.O. that features "The Map," a concerto for cello, video, and orchestra by Tan Dun. ♦ Aug. 8-9 at 8:30: Brian Stokes Mitchell and Dianne Reeves sing in John Williams's jazz arrangement of "My Fair Lady." (See This Week.) ♦ Aug. 11 at 8:30: Jean-Yves Thibaudet's piano recital is rich in Liszt transcriptions, including works based on Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" and Verdi's "Rigoletto." ♦ Aug. 13 at 8:30: Deborah Voigt does a star turn with the B.S.O., singing Wagner's "Wesendonck Lieder" on a program also featuring music from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet"; Gianandrea Noseda conducts. ♦ Aug. 15 at 2:30: Robert Spano conducts the orchestra in works by MacDowell (the Piano Concerto No. 2, with André Watts), Tchaikovsky (Act II of "The Nutcracker"), and Bernard Rands ("Body and Shadow," part of the annual Festival of Contemporary Music). ♦ Aug. 16 at 8:30: The contemporary festival concludes with Spano conducting the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in music by Carter (the "Holiday Overture"), Gandolfi, Salonen, and Berio ("Sinfonia"). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

TANNERY POND CONCERTS
The clarinettist Alexander Fiterstein and the pianist Ken Noda perform classics by Debussy, Brahms (the Clarinet Sonata in F Minor), Schumann, and Berg. (Darrow School, New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-846-5848. Aug. 7 at 8.)

MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL
The Northeast's preëminent chamber-music festival offers its final concerts of the season. (Marlboro, Vt. Aug. 7 and Aug. 13-14 at 8:30 and Aug. 8 and Aug. 15 at 2:30. For information on programs, and to purchase tickets, see www.marlboromusic.org.)

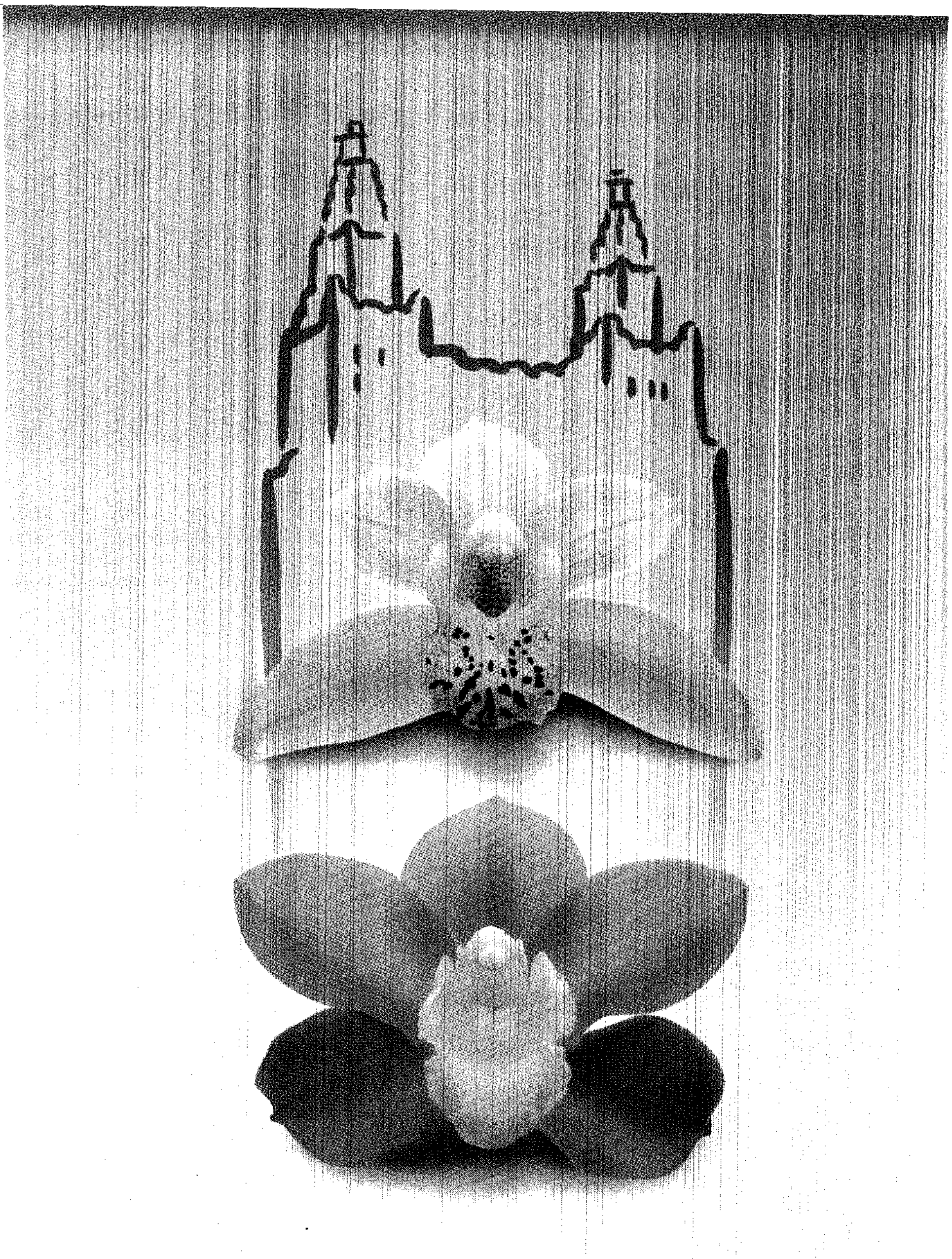
MAVERICK CONCERTS
Aug. 8 at 3: The Paris-based Ysaÿe String Quartet performs Franck's Quartet in D Major, a sumptuous and demanding essay in late-Romantic sonority. (It was a favorite of Proust, who once roused a string quartet in the middle of the night to come over and play it for him—twice.) The program also features quartets by Beethoven (the "Serioso") and Haydn. ♦ Aug. 15 at 3: The Shanghai String Quartet offers quartets by Beethoven and Janáček along with Schumann's Piano Quintet (with Ruth Laredo). (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Aug. 8 at 3: Serious, late-stage works by Mozart, Schubert (the Quartet No. 15 in G Major), and Elgar (the Piano Quintet) are offered by the Bard Festival String Quartet and the pianist Melvin Chen. ♦ Aug. 15 at 3: Pamela Mia Paul joins the Arianna String Quartet for music by Haydn, Ravel, and Brahms (the Piano Quintet in F Minor). (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"SHACKLETON EXTRAVAGANZA"
The cast and crew of the upcoming Off-Off Broadway musical comedy "Meet the Real Ernest Shackleton" celebrate the centennial of Shackleton's ill-fated Antarctic expedition with scenes from the play, a fashion show, and a few songs featuring Terry Radigan on the banjo—which was, apparently, the only instrument that the stranded explorers had at their disposal. (The Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. 212-614-0505. Aug. 11 at 7.)

READINGS
Aug. 4 at 7: "State of Emergency: Unconventional Readings." Laurie Anderson, Paul Auster, Russell Banks, Joan Didion, Jonathan Safran Foer, Salman Rushdie, and many others gather for a night dedicated to raising awareness about threats to freedom in the United States. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7 E. 7th St. For more information, call the PEN American Center at 212-334-1660, ext. 107.) ♦ Aug. 5 at 7:30: Toni Morrison offers selections from her novel "Love." The novelist Edward P. Jones will also read from his work. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777.) ♦ Aug. 6 at 7:30: Pearl Abraham and Ellen Miller, contributors to "Brooklyn Noir," join the anthology's editor, Tim McLoughlin, for a night of crime stories. (Barnes & Noble, 267 Seventh Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Aug. 17 at 12:30: Candace Bushnell gives an alfresco reading from her novel "Trading Up." (Bryant Park Reading Room, 42nd St. near Sixth Ave. For more information, call 212-768-4242.)



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The two iconic monsters do battle in Antarctica, in an action movie directed by Paul W. S. Anderson. Opening Aug. 13.

CODE 46
Michael Winterbottom's new film is a sci-fi love story set in a future in which people cannot travel freely from city to city. With Samantha Morton and Tim Robbins. Opening Aug. 6.

COLLATERAL
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 6. (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

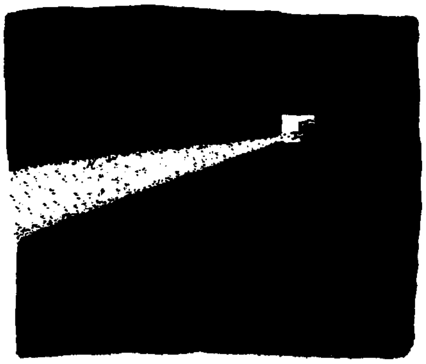
COWARDS BEND THE KNEE
Guy Maddin directed this experimental feature described as an autobiographical peep show involving lust, revenge, guilt, incest, and ice hockey. Opening Aug. 11. (Film Forum.)

Opening August 13, Paul W. S. Anderson's "Alien vs. Predator."

DANNY DECKCHAIR
The story of an Australian cement-truck driver (Rhys Ifans) who escapes his unhappy life by tying balloons to his lawn chair and soaring off into the sky. Written and directed by Jeff Balsmeyer. Opening Aug. 11. (Union Square.)

LAST LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Pen-ek Ratanaruang directed this drama in which a yakuza member posing as a librarian (Asano Tadanobu) hides out in Bangkok with a bar girl (Sinitta Boonyasak). In Japanese and Thai. Opening Aug. 6. (Cinema Village.)

LITTLE BLACK BOOK
Brittany Murphy plays a talk-show producer who starts snooping around in the Palm Pilot of her boyfriend (Ron Livingston), in a romantic comedy directed by Nick Hurran. Opening Aug. 6.



OPEN WATER
A thriller, shot without special effects, in which a vacationing couple are abandoned in the middle of shark-infested waters. Written and directed by Chris Kentis. Opening Aug. 6. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

THE OTHER WORLD
Merzak Allouache directed this drama about a French-born Muslim woman who visits Algeria in search of her lost lover. In French and Arabic. Opening Aug. 6. (Anthology Film Archives.)

THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2: ROYAL ENGAGEMENT
Princess Mia (Anne Hathaway) resists an arranged marriage, in a teen comedy directed by Garry Marshall. With Julie Andrews and John Rhys-Davies. Opening Aug. 11.

STANDER
A thriller based on the true story of Andre Stander (Thomas Jane), a South African police captain who became a bank robber after a crisis of conscience over apartheid. Directed by Bronwen Hughes. Opening Aug. 6. (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, and Sunshine Cinema.)

WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE
Mark Ruffalo plays a married college instructor who has an affair with his best friend's wife (Naomi Watts), in a drama directed by John Curran. With Peter Krause and Laura Dern. Opening Aug. 13. (Cinema 1, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

YU-GI-OH!: THE MOVIE
An animated adventure based on the popular card game and television series. Opening Aug. 13.

FILM NOTES

BEFORE SUNSET
A lovely sequel to "Before Sunrise," the charmingly diminutive romantic movie that Richard Linklater made in 1995, in which Jesse (Ethan Hawke), a footloose young American, and Celine (Julie Delpy), a French student, spent a night together in Vienna. Nine years have gone by, and Jesse, now a novelist, is hawking a book in Paris, where he runs into Celine, who has become an earnest international health worker. Jesse is supposed to fly home later that day, but they agree to walk around the Left Bank. Like the earlier movie, "Before Sunset" turns into an orgy of talk—flirtatious, soulful, boastful, self-deprecating talk, some of it borderline pretentious but all of it utterly convincing as the intelligent and foolish things said by people who connect through their tastes, ideas, and passions. The drama emerges from the movie's form: it plays in real time, and for about eighty minutes, as Linklater's camera gravely follows these two around, we wonder whether Jesse will go home to his wife and child or allow himself to be fascinated, once again, by a serious young woman given to melancholy self-revelation.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/5/04.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

THE BLIND SWORDSMAN: ZATOICHI
The television personality, movie star, director, and best-selling author Takeshi (Beat) Kitano reincarnates the character of Zatoichi, a beloved figure in Japanese pop culture. Sightless, Zatoichi wanders the countryside seeking work as a humble masseur, cutting down evildoers when they cross his path. The movie is not without its crude pleasures, such as watching the near-comatose Zatoichi suddenly step into action, becoming a human Cuisinart. And there is also a trippy strangeness to the whole production: gags when you least expect them, an exuberant dance number at the end, some wild synthesizer music. But Kitano, with his slapped-together filmmaking, is relying heavily on the built-in affection for his hero. In Japanese.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE BOURNE SUPREMACY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CATWOMAN
Halle Berry stars in this would-be romp, inspired by the comic book, which rejects the intriguing duality of the original character in favor of simple-minded flirtatiousness and leather-and-lip-gloss heroics. Berry physically throws herself into her performance, but an overreliance on special effects undercuts her kittenish body language. Another hundred million dollars down the drain.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)

THE DOOR IN THE FLOOR
Tod Williams's adaptation of the first third of John Irving's novel "A Widow for One Year" has an aura of quiet intensity and lacerating intimacy. Ted Cole (Jeff Bridges), a successful children's-book writer and illustrator, and his wife, Marion (Kim Basinger), are both held together and separated by the death of their teen-age boys, some years ago, in an accident. Ted deals with his grief by boozing, sleeping around, and generally acting like a bear in a garbage dump. Marion, for her part, has become dead to her husband and to their four-year-old daughter. Eddie (Jon Foster), a pale and lanky sixteen-year-old, enters

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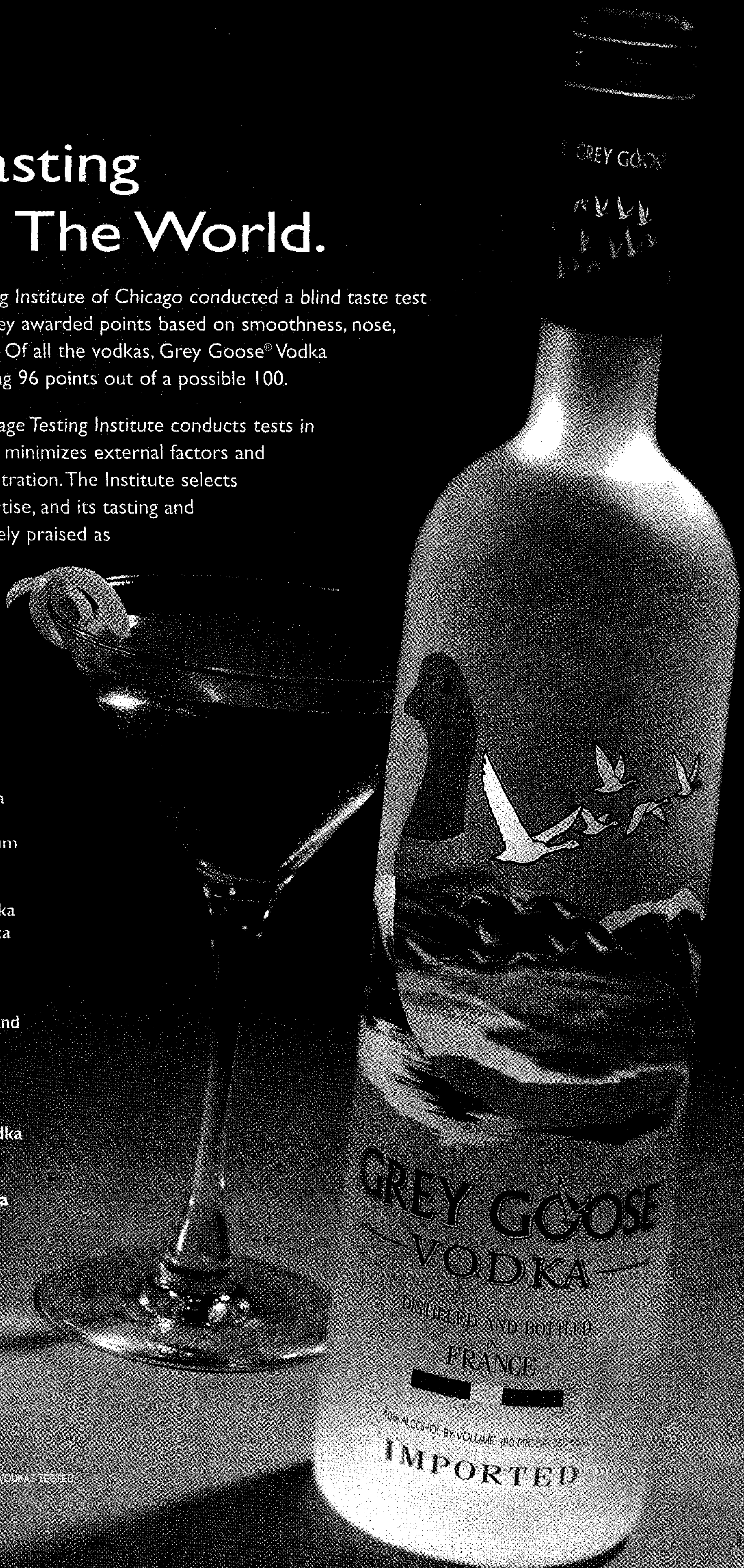
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91	Van Hoo Vodka
91	Stolichnaya Vodka
90	Tanqueray Sterling Vodka
90	Rain 1995 Harvest Vodka
89	Ketel One Vodka
88	Wyborowa Vodka
87	Kremlyovskaya Vodka
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85	Skyy Vodka
82	Original Polish Vodka
82	Glenmore Special
82	Fleischmann's Royal Vodka
81	Mr. Boston Vodka
80	Pole Star Vodka
80	Luksusowa Potato Vodka
80	Absolut Vodka
78	Cardinal Vodka
78	Barton Vodka
78	Barclay's Vodka
78	Amazon Vodka
76	Skol Vodka
74	Smirnoff Vodka
74	Crystal Palace Vodka
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this disintegrating marriage as an assistant to Ted; his real job, we understand, is to sleep with the zombie Marion. Eddie, it seems, reminds her of one of the dead sons, and Ted thinks that this teen-ager will bring his wife back to life—or something like that. Psychologically, the material is half-senseless and rather unappealing, and the movie drifts into inconsequence.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

GARDEN STATE

Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff), a struggling actor, arrives in his native New Jersey with some extra baggage: his paraplegic mother has possibly committed suicide, he's been on Zoloft since forever, and his one major acting credit is as a retarded quarterback. This would be a difficult burden for any young man, let alone a début movie. But Braff, who also wrote and directed, keeps the tone light with some very funny homecoming scenes. There's a party where Large is greeted as "Jersey's De Niro," a run-in with a high-school friend turned cop, and, like a winning bass line, the smirking wit of his stoner friend Mark (Peter Sarsgaard). The movie is also lifted by the presence of Natalie Portman, perhaps the ultimate ethereal hometown girl. Braff eventually takes the movie to emotional places where only the extremely tenderhearted will follow, but there are a lot of nice moments that resonate, and a beautiful soundtrack of moody, interior music.—*M.A.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE

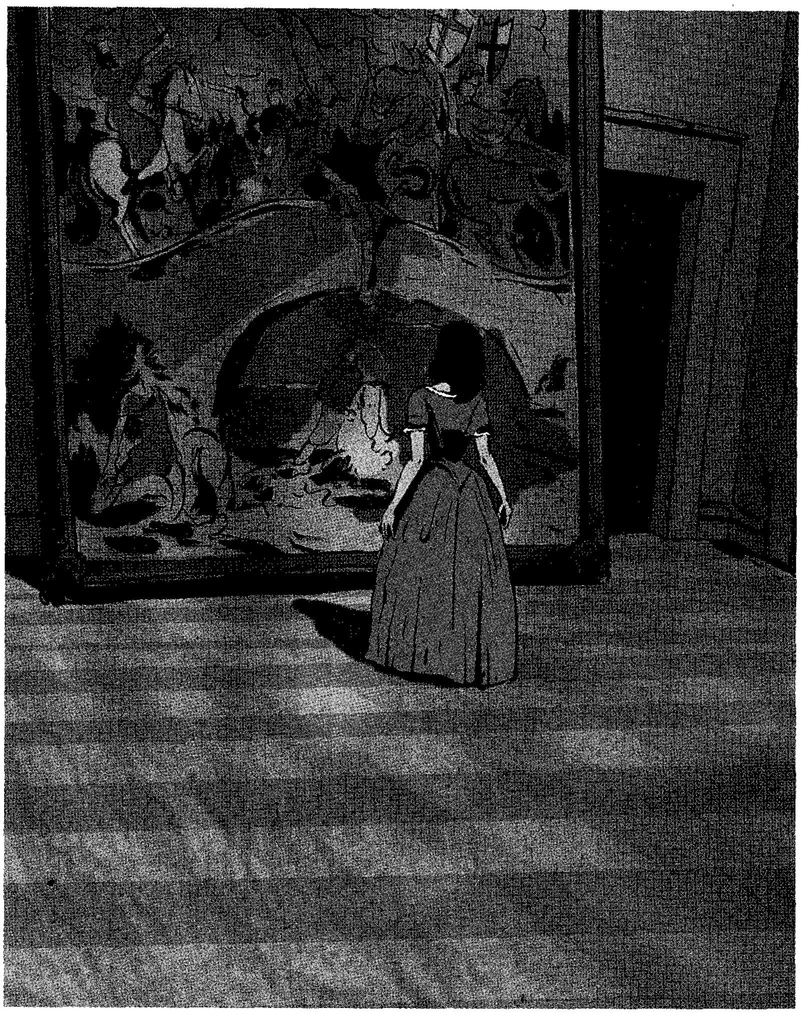
A stoner comedy starring "persons of colors." Harold (John Cho) is a Korean investment banker, and his best friend, Kumar (Kal Penn), is a South Asian slacker avoiding medical school. The talky script presents white people as an ethnic group like any other, worthy of mockery (extreme-sports guys) and praise (John Hughes movies). Despite that innovation, Harold and Kumar encounter the usual teen-movie setups, right down to the encounter with the faded television celebrity (Neil Patrick Harris, a.k.a. Doogie Howser, M.D.). The movie is worth seeing for its manhandling of political correctness and Penn's irreverent charisma—just don't expect a revolution. Directed by Danny Leiner, whose previous effort was the Brechtian drama "Dude, Where's My Car?"—*M.A.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, and Union Square.)

I, ROBOT

It's Will Smith versus the machines in this extremely loose adaptation of a series of Isaac Asimov stories. Directed by the fantasist Alex Proyas ("Dark City," "The Crow"), the movie is a C.G.I. extravaganza, full of gleaming surfaces and moody lighting in the manner of Edward Hopper. The robots themselves have beautiful ice-blue eyes, and the Chicago cityscapes have a "Blade Runner"-like intricacy. The studly Smith (he has a swoon-inducing shower scene) suspects that one of the latest models of a new robot line has committed murder, and the plot becomes a succession of chases that are progressively exciting. There's not much in the way of clever dialogue (the dreaded Akiva Goldsman had a hand in the script), but Proyas has a real facility for this kind of speculative storytelling.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE LEOPARD

A sweeping popular epic, with obvious similarities to "Gone with the Wind," and with an almost Chekhovian sensibility. Based on a novel by an impoverished Sicilian prince, it has a hero on a grand scale—Don Fabrizio, Prince of Salina, played superlatively by Burt Lancaster, who acknowledged that he modelled his performance on the nobleman director, Luchino Visconti. The film is set in the eighteen-sixties, when Italy was in the middle of a revolution, but it's essentially about the Prince himself—the aging Leopard—and how he reacts to the social changes. We couldn't be any closer to Lancaster's Prince if we were inside his skin—which in a way we are. We see what he sees, feel what he feels, and, in the last hour, set at a splendid ball that marks the aristocrats' acceptance of the Mafia-dominated parvenus who are taking over their wealth and power, we're inside his mind as he relives his life, experiences regret, and accepts the dying of his class and his own death. It's one of the greatest of all passages in movies. With Alain Delon as the Prince's sly nephew and Claudia Cardinale as a shrewd, sensual heiress. Originally released in 1963. In English and Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Aug. 13-17.)



At Film Forum, a revival of Luchino Visconti's "The Leopard."

ZOHAR LAZAR

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Theatre.)

MARIA FULL OF GRACE

In this superbly poised independent film, Maria (Catalina Sandino Moreno), a willful seventeen-year-old, unhappily pregnant and stuck in a factory job, agrees to serve as a "mule," carrying in her stomach little pellets of heroin from her native Colombia to New Jersey. Joshua Marston, a thirty-five-year-old N.Y.U. film-school graduate, nosed around Colombia and New York's immigrant neighborhoods before beginning to shoot "Maria," his first full-length feature, and the way he dramatized the material seems instinctively right: he goes step by step, detail by detail, emotion by emotion, eliding nothing, exaggerating nothing. In his calm and lucid way, Marston has made one of the emblematic coming-to-America stories of our time.—*D.D.* (7/26/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ORWELL ROLLS IN HIS GRAVE

Another "The sky is falling!" documentary that's hard to resist. The filmmaker Robert Kane Pappas takes the Orwellian concepts of "doublespeak" and "endless war" and applies them to contemporary matters, creating an acerbic diatribe against media consolidation. The film revisits issues that have been debated ad nauseam, but it's persuasive, nicely edited, and, ultimately, very disturbing.—*B.D.* (Village East Cinemas.)

SHE HATE ME

The frenzied new film from Spike Lee, who is appalled and aroused to a new and bewildering degree. We start amid financial scandal, as Jack Armstrong (Anthony Mackie) gets fired from a pharmaceutical company for leaking details of its mismanagement. That promising topic is, however, speedily left behind, as Jack turns, without warning, to the lucrative trade of sperm donation; to be specific, he impregnates professional lesbians for at least five thousand bucks a pop. The movie unstintingly applauds such heavy industry, even morphing into animation for the depiction of our hero's eager sperm; add the spurious departure into Mafia land (complete with a miscast John Turturro), plus a maladroit flashback to the Watergate break-in, and what we wind up with is explicable only as collage—a bright, multifarious jamming together of racial wrath and horny celebration, better known as a complete mess. Perhaps, in an election year, you need to make this much noise to be heard. With Monica Bellucci, Woody Harrelson, Brian Dennehy, and a dirty-mouthed Ellen Barkin.—*Anthony Lane* (8/2/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, and Village Theatre VII.)

SPIDER-MAN 2

Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) is having problems with his stickiness. He keeps changing into his Spiderman duds, leaping through the canyons of Manhattan, and finding, to his dismay, that the white stuff just won't shoot in the way it used to. No option but to hang up the outfit and walk away. Fortunately, we are only halfway through the movie. Once again, Sam Raimi is the director, and once again the plight is one of uncertainty: to swing or not to swing? Not until the arrival of Doc Ock (Alfred Molina), a many-limbed scientist who likes to do antisocial things to subway cars, is our hero moved to rejoin the action. Molina is the real draw of the film, opting not for the standard evil genius but for a good, sorrowing genius who is nudged into malice by boredom and bereavement. In fact, despite the fantastical high of the set pieces, (not least the most pertinent use of a lady's umbrella since "Mary Pop-

pins"), almost everyone here feels rather lonely and stuck. This could be the first superhero franchise that will end up requiring the services of Ingmar Bergman. With Kirsten Dunst, dreamier than ever, as Peter's beloved (but not girlfriend).—*A.L.* (7/12 & 19/04) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

WINCHESTER '73
It's known in film history as the Western that turned stars into industry players, because James Stewart's contract gave him fifty per cent of the profits. But it's also the first film that united him with the rugged action director Anthony Mann and exploited the marrow-deep toughness that won Stewart the Distinguished Flying Cross in the Second World War. He plays a sharpshooter who hunts for the man who killed his father (Stephen McNally), and his quest combines elements of Cain and Abel—and Oedipus. The movie fills arid Southwestern vistas with bellicose Indians (such as Rock Hudson in war paint), sneering, trigger-happy thieves (the most amusing is the ever-sneerful Dan Duryea), valiant U.S. cavalrymen (including Tony Curtis, billed as "Anthony"), and other stock figures: a good-hearted dance-hall girl (Shelley Winters), an amoral Indian trader (John McIntire). But the way Mann and screenwriter Borden Chase deploy their characters is anything but stock. Courage, integrity, and loyalty get tested at every turn. And Stewart's reedy intensity holds the picture together. His seismic shock of recognition when he first spots McNally is a peak of action-film performance. Originally released in 1950.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 14.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE CLEARING (7/12 & 19/04)
Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village Theatre VII.

FAHRENHEIT 9/11 (6/28/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.

LOS ANGELES PLAYS ITSELF
Film Forum.

THE VILLAGE
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Aug. 15: "Paradise (Lost): Los Angeles on Film." Aug. 7 at 2: "The Day of the Locust" (1975, John Schlesinger). ♦ Aug. 7 at 4:45: "Targets" (1968, Peter Bogdanovich). ♦ Aug. 8 at 2: "In a Lonely Place" (1950, Nicholas Ray) and "The Life and Death of 9413: A Hollywood Extra" (1927, Robert Florey and Slavko Vorapich). ♦ Aug. 8 at 4: "Mulholland Drive" (2001, David Lynch). ♦ Aug. 14 at 2: "Criss Cross" (1949, Robert Siodmak) and "The Music Box" (1932, James Parrott). ♦ Aug. 14 at 4:30: "Off the Menu: The Last Days of Chasen's" (1997, Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini). ♦ Aug. 15 at 1: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich) and "Bunker Hill" (1956, Kent MacKenzie). ♦ Aug. 15 at 3:30: "Heat" (1995, Michael Mann). ♦ Repertory nights. Aug. 6 at 7:30 and Aug. 7-8 at 6:30: "Throne of Blood" (1957, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 13 at 7:30 and Aug. 14-15 at 6:30: "Barry Lyndon" (1975, Stanley Kubrick).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—A tribute to Kino International. Aug. 5 at 7: "In the Mood for Love" (2000, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese). ♦ Aug. 5 at 9:15: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong; in Cantonese and Spanish). ♦ Aug. 6 at 7: "The Killer" (1989, John Woo; in Cantonese). ♦ Aug. 6 at 9:45: "The Piano Teacher" (1991, Michael Haneke; in French). ♦ Aug. 7 at 2:30: "Modern Times" (1936, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Aug. 7 at 4:30: "Andrei Rublev" (1966, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 7 at 8:30: "Solaris" (1972, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 8 at 2: "The Little Fugitive" (1953, Morris Engel). ♦ Aug. 8 at 4: "Un Chien Andalou" (1929, Luis Buñuel; silent) and "L'Âge d'Or" (1930, Buñuel; in French). ♦ Aug. 8 at 6: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang; silent). ♦ Aug. 8 at 8:30: "Time Regained" (1999, Raul Ruiz; in French). ♦ Aug. 9 at 7: "M" (1931, Lang; in German). ♦ Aug. 9 at 9:15: "Galileo" (1974, Joseph Losey). ♦ Aug. 10 at 7: "Rome: Open City" (1945, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 10 at 9:15: "Il Grido" (1957, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 11 at 7: "Match Factory Girl" (1990, Aki Kaurismäki; in Finnish). ♦ Aug. 11 at 9: "La Vie de Bohème" (1992, Kaurismäki; in French). ♦ Aug. 12 at 7: "The Mirror" (1975, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 12 at 9:15: "The Sacrifice" (1986, Tarkovsky; in Swedish). ♦ Aug. 13 at 7: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 13 at 9: "I Vitelloni" (1953, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 14 at 2:30: "Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography" (1992, Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, and Stuart Samuels). ♦ Aug. 14 at 4:30: "Les Bonnes Femmes" (1960, Claude Chabrol; in French). ♦ Aug. 14 at 6:30: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1919, Robert Wiene; in German) and "Cops" (1922, Edward F. Cline and Buster Keaton). ♦ Aug. 14 at 8:30: "8½" (1963, Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2:15: "The Golden Coach" (1952, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ Aug. 15 at 4:30: "Pandora's Box" (1928, G. W. Pabst). ♦ Aug. 15 at 7: "My Name Is Ivan" (1962, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 15 at 9:15: "The Blue Angel" (1930, Joseph von Sternberg; in German). ♦ Aug. 16 at 7: "The Return" (2003, Andrei Zvyagintsev; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 16 at 9:15: "Dersu Uzala" (1975, Akira Kurosawa; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 17 at 7: "Color of Pomegranates" (1969, Sergei Paradjanov; in Russian). ♦ Aug. 17 at 9: "Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors" (1965, Paradjanov; in Ukrainian).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—An R. W. Fassbinder retrospective. All films are in German. Aug. 5 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Mother Kusters Goes to Heaven" (1975). ♦ Aug. 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Veronika Voss" (1982). ♦ Aug. 9 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Fear of Fear" (1975). ♦ Aug. 12 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Stationmaster's Wife" (1977). ♦ Aug. 14 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Lili Marleen" (1980). ♦ Aug. 16 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Satan's Brew" (1976). ♦ A Yasujiro Ozu retrospective. All films are in Japanese. Aug. 6 at 3, 6, and 9: "Tokyo Twilight" (1974). ♦ Aug. 8 at 3, 6, and 9: "Tokyo Story" (1953). ♦ Aug. 10 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "A Hen in the Wind" (1948). ♦ Aug. 13 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Good Morning" (1959). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Equinox Flower" (1958). ♦ Aug. 17 at 6:45 and 9: "Floating Weeds" (1959). ♦ Repertory favorites. Aug. 11 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9:30: "A High Wind in Jamaica" (1965, Alexander Mackendrick).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: Free drive-in-style moviegoing. Aug. 9: "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" (1939, Frank Capra). ♦ Aug. 16: "Planet of the Apes" (1968, Franklin J. Schaffner).

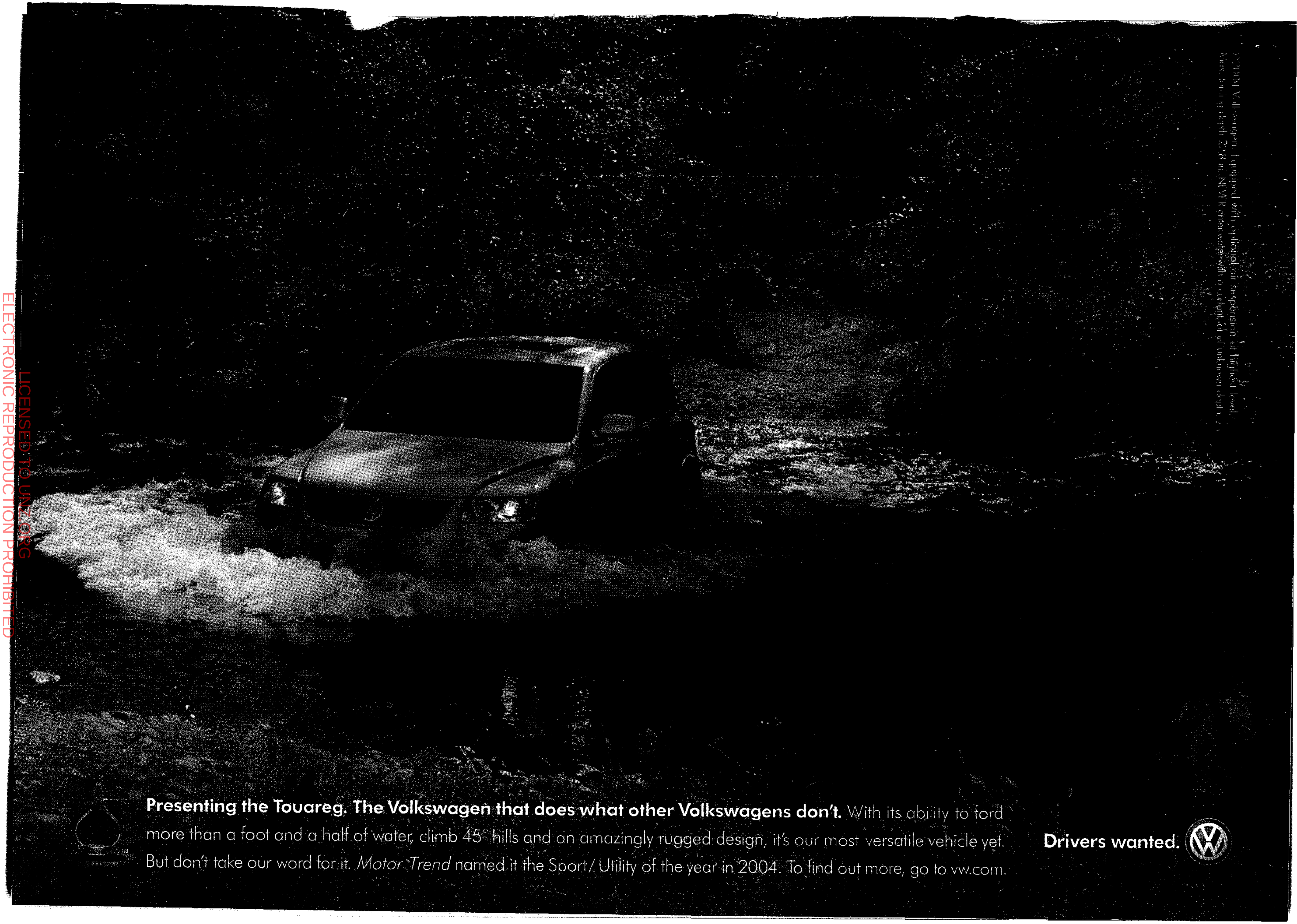
EMPIRE-FULTON FERRY STATE PARK
26 New Dock St., Brooklyn—Thursdays, starting at dusk: More free drive-in-style moviegoing. Aug. 5: "25th Hour" (2002, Spike Lee). ♦ Aug. 12: "Jaws" (1975, Steven Spielberg).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Aug. 4-5 at 1:10, 4:30, and 8: "La Dolce Vita" (1960, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 6-12 at 1:10, 3:50, 7, and 9:30: "Serpico" (1973, Sidney Lumet). ♦ Aug. 13-17 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Leopard" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Aug. 6-7: "Bob Roberts" (1992, Tim Robbins). ♦ Aug. 13-14: "The Princess Bride" (1987, Rob Reiner).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Aug. 28: "Five-Star Films: Fifty Years of Audience Favorites." Aug. 7 at 6: "Rome: Open City" (1945, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 7 at 8: "I Vitelloni" (1953, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Aug. 14 at 6: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). ♦ Aug. 14 at 8:30: "Sunset Boulevard" (1950, Billy Wilder).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Aug. 8: Restored rock-and-roll films from Columbia Pictures. Aug. 4 at 4 and 8:30 and Aug. 8 at 6: "Bye Bye Birdie" (1963, George Sidney). ♦ Aug. 4 at 6:30 and Aug. 8 at 4 and 8:15: "Idol on Parade" (1959, John Gilling). ♦ Aug. 5 at 5:30 and Aug. 6 at 7: "Twist Around the Clock" (1956, Oscar Rudolph). ♦ Aug. 5 at 7:15: "Rock Around the Clock" (1956, Fred Sears). ♦ Aug. 5 at 9: "Don't Knock the Rock" (1956, Sears). ♦ Aug. 6 at 3:30, Aug. 7 at 4 and 7:30, and Aug. 8 at 2:15: "It's Trad, Dad!" (1962, Richard Lester). ♦ Aug. 6 at 5:15 and Aug. 7 at 2, 5:45, and 9:15: "Just for Fun" (1963, Gordon Flemyng). ♦ Aug. 6 at 8:30: "Let's Rock" (1958, Harry Foster). ♦ Through Aug. 29: "Dark Streets and Vast Horizons: The American Vision of Anthony Mann." Aug. 11 at 5 and 9 and Aug. 13 at 9: "The Naked Spur" (1953). ♦ Aug. 11 at 7 and Aug. 12 at 9: "Bend of the River" (1952). ♦ Aug. 12 at 4:15, Aug. 14 at 7, and Aug. 16 at 1: "The Man from Laramie" (1955). ♦ Aug. 13 at 7: "The Far Country" (1955). ♦ Aug. 14 at 2 and Aug. 17 at 1:30 and 8:45: "The Bamboo Blonde" (1946). ♦ Aug. 14 at 3:30, Aug. 15 at 5:15, and Aug. 16 at 4:45: "Two O'Clock Courage" (1945). ♦ Aug. 14 at 5 and 9:10: "Winchester '73" (†). ♦ Aug. 15 at 2 and 6:45: "Railroaded!" (1947). ♦ Aug. 15 at 3:30 and 8:30 and Aug. 16 at 3:10: "Desperate" (1947).



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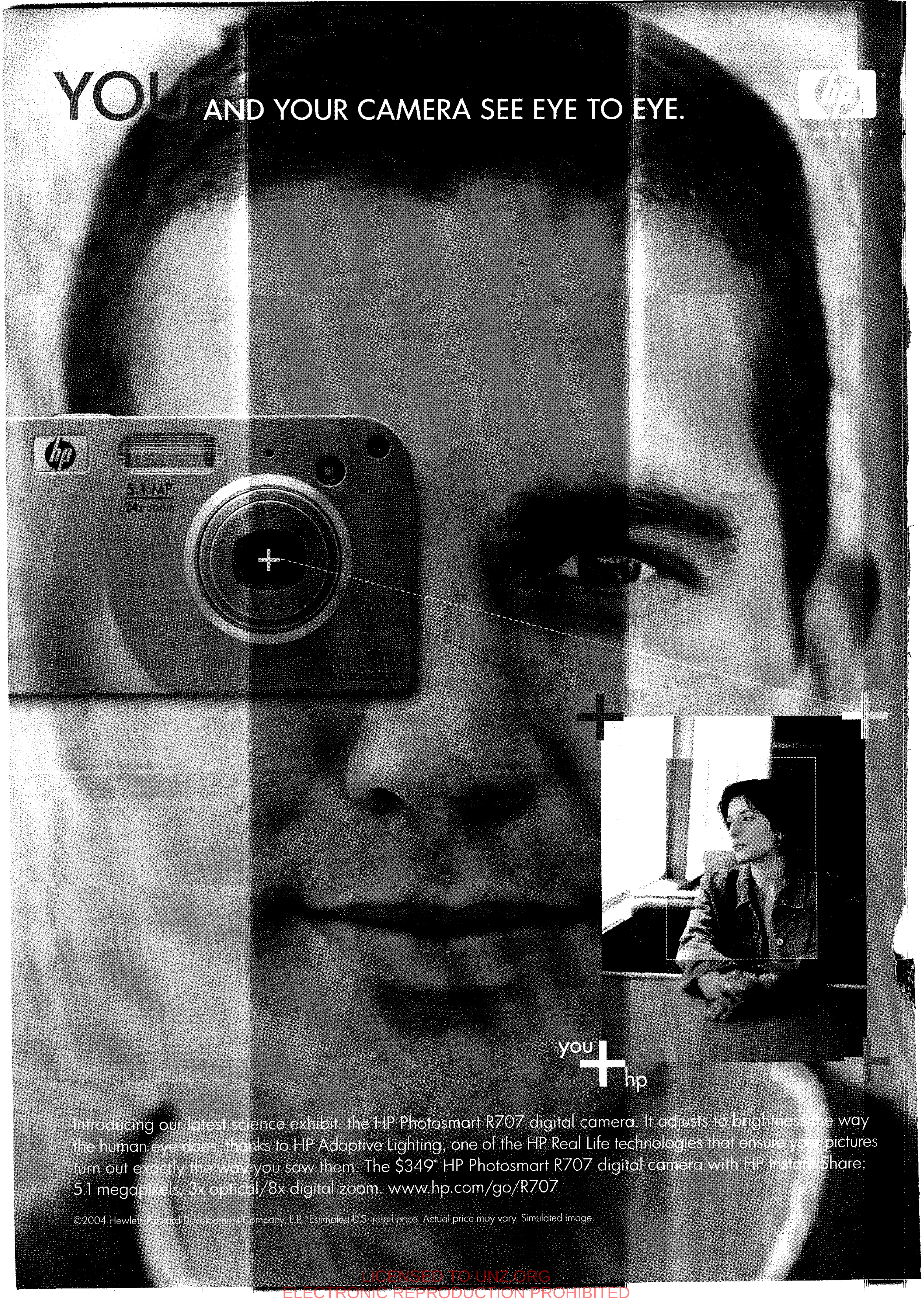
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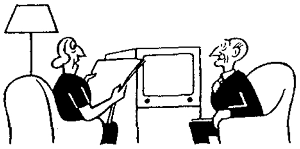
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

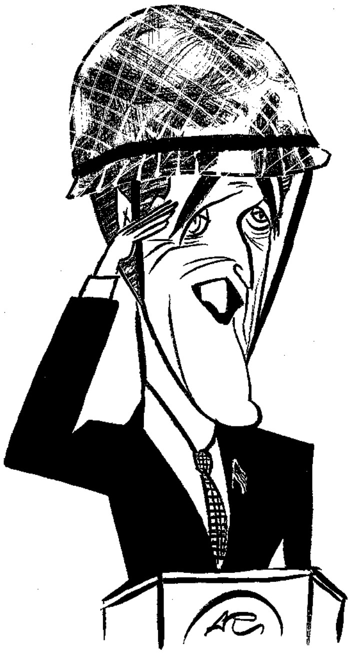
COMMENT
CONVENTIONAL WARFARE



There's a case to be made that it hardly matters how eloquent or effective John Kerry was at the Democratic National Convention last week. What matters infinitely more is that George W. Bush is the worst President the country has endured since Richard Nixon, and even mediocrity would be an improvement. Indeed, if one regards the Bush Administration's sins of governance—its distortion of intelligence in a time of crisis, its grotesque indulgence of the rich at the expense of the rest, its arrogant dissolution of American prestige and influence abroad, its heedless squandering of the world's resources—as worse than the third-rate burglary and second-rate coverup of thirty years ago, then President Bush is in a league only with the likes of Harding, Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan.

For the most part, however, the speakers at the Democratic National Convention refrained from making that case. In the lingo of the week, "Bush-bashing"—at least, for those speakers featured in the shamefully narrow sliver of prime time on offer from the networks—was forbidden. "Making the sale," selling Kerry to the electorate, was the goal of nearly every pronouncement from the stage. In the rehearsal rooms of Boston's Fleet Center, Party scriveners "scrubbed" speeches of any rhetoric that risked alienating those voters who remain, thirteen weeks from Election Day, undecided. The bookstores around town were well stocked with bilious volumes like "The Bush-Hater's Handbook," "The I Hate George W. Bush Reader," "The Lies of George W. Bush," but only hints of such outrage sneaked past the Party apparatchiks.

Kerry and his team had reasons for controlling the tone of the Convention and stifling any shrill indulgences. To condescend to Bush, to affect a collective sneer, would be a gift to the Republicans; and—a lesson learned from Conventions past—it is easier to decry divisiveness when you aren't displaying it. The event's language was designed to bolster Kerry and to criticize Bush only by way of invidious comparison. (Not that the comparisons and references were terribly subtle. No one needed an Enigma machine to figure out why Jimmy Carter was recalling his days aboard a nuclear submarine or why Bill Clinton was now cheerfully discussing the fact that he, just like a certain President and Vice-President, had chosen not to serve in Vietnam while a certain Democratic contender had volunteered.) The attempt to establish authenticity is a universal in politics—Yitzhak Rabin had it, Shimon Peres didn't; Eisenhower had it, Stevenson didn't—and it has long been a particular burden for Democrats, who, since 1968, have routinely been cast, by their opponents, as the party of white-wine-swilling weaklings.



Kerry's authenticity, the Democratic strategists have agreed, resides in the valor of his youth. And there was something undeniably effective in the way the Convention was militarized, with all those retired generals and comrades-in-arms on the stage to testify to his bravery under fire. Certainly it cast a harsh light on Bush—not only on the President's soft berth and spotty attendance in the National Guard but also on his flight-suit swagger, the calls to "bring 'em on." The greatest similarity between the first J.F.K. and the current one lies not in their Ivy privilege or clambake geography but, rather, in the fact that both built a Presidential campaign narrative from acts of Navy heroism. Still, the Convention's display of martial virtue was a little wor-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

rying, too: one wonders if future Democrats, in this age of a volunteer, professional Army, will be able to challenge a conservative Republican without the moral credential of three Purple Hearts, a Silver Star, and a Bronze Star.

It takes little from Kerry's performance to recall just how closely his speech conformed to the tactics and tropes of other acceptance speeches, Democratic and Republican, of the past several decades. Nearly all of them reach into the same spice rack of metaphor, image, and avowal. There is the affirmation that one's party is the party of uniters, not dividers; there are the paeans to the vanquished fellow-candidates; there is the moment of calibrated self-deprecation ("I'll try to hold my charisma in check," Bush, 1988; "I know I won't always be the most exciting politician," Gore, 2000); there are the bold preferences ("I hate war, I love peace," Bush, 1988); there are the cadenced attempts to draw in the delegates ("Can you imagine?" "Yes!" "Will we let them . . . ?" "No!"); there are the invocations of small boys—full of hope and dreams, haunted by early tragedy, comforted by heroic mothers—who turn out to be none other than the nominee (the man from Hope was exceptionally good at this in 1992, but the ne plus ultra of cornball narcissism was Nixon in 1968); and, finally, there are more rhetorical bridges than in all of Venice, more rhetorical mornings than at a breakfast-all-day coffee shop. To read these speeches is to encounter not only the expectable baloney but a form as unwavering as Hopi wedding rites or the Mourner's Kaddish. They are not called convention speeches for nothing. These are rituals designed less to broadcast detailed policy than to armor the speaker against the onslaught to come, speeches in which George McGovern waxes muscular about providing the "shield of our strength" to our weaker allies and George W. talks of "learning to protect the natural world around us" and changing "the tone of Washington to one of civility and respect." Still, conventions, like all rituals, reveal more than they seem to.

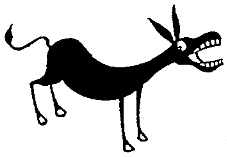
Last week, Kerry proved right those who said that in the homestretch he can be vigorously direct, even combative. As a performer, he could never match Clinton's conversational connection or Barack Obama's uncanny marriage of masterly intimacy and enlivened syntax ("The audacity of hope!"). A spirited version of the traditional big-hall delivery—the half-shouted singsong—is about the best Kerry can do. But the decision to have the other prime-time speakers hold off on the Bush-bashing and testify to his biographical authenticity—his bravery, his compassion, his kindness to household pets—made Kerry's speech that much more forceful. The cautious scrubbing, it emerged, was all in the service of the one speaker who really mattered.

"I will restore trust and credibility to the White House," Kerry said. "I will be a Commander-in-Chief who will never mislead us into war. I will have a Vice-President who will not conduct secret meetings with polluters to rewrite our environmental laws. . . . I want an America that relies on its ingenuity and innovation—not the Saudi royal family." Not that he was mentioning any names, mind you. After deploying these depth charges throughout the speech, Kerry kept a straight face as he delivered the time-honored request that his opponent engage in a high-minded campaign of "big ideas, not small-minded attacks."

In fact, the speech was a signal that the coming election will itself be a kind of war from which neither side is likely to flinch. Soon a new book will head for the shelves, there to do battle with "The Bush-Hater's Handbook." It is called "Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry." The publisher is Regnery, which had a best-seller not long ago with a volume alleging that the Clintons hung prophylactics from the branches of the White House Christmas tree.

—*David Remnick*

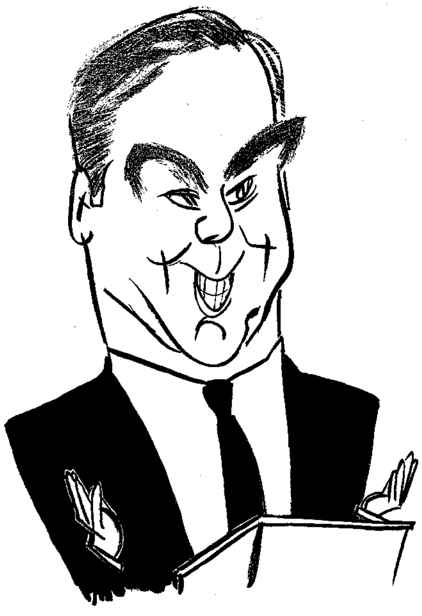
CONVENTION DIARY
COMERS



Along East Broadway, in Boston, the day before the start of the Democratic National Convention, residents and shopkeepers stood on the sidewalk and waved at a passing convoy of buses. For months, police- and fire-department unions had threatened to disrupt the Convention, but now everything seemed amicable—on message. Police motorcycles escorted the buses, which were conveying members and friends of the New York delegation, through a series of red lights to a clambake on the beach in South Boston.

"I feel like a rock star," one of the New Yorkers said.

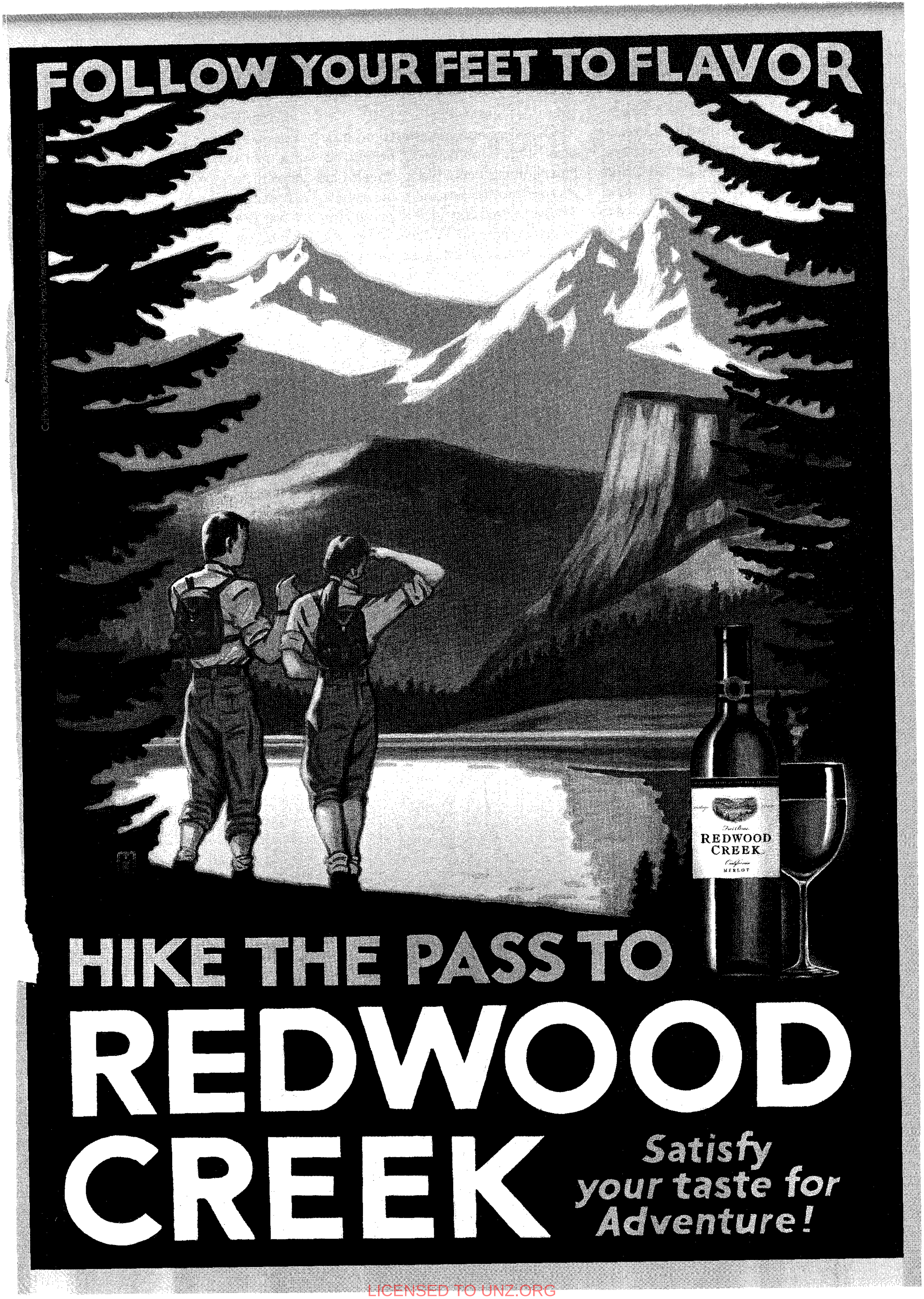
Political conventions are customarily compared to the Super Bowl, owing to all the sideshows and parties and the outsized ratio of media personnel to big-game participants, but a better analogy, if we're talking football, might be the N.F.L. scouting combine, where college players gather to show off for professional scouts and coaches. The Convention, as seen from the ground, is an intersection of up-and-comers and might-have-beens, rising stars and fading grandees, latching on to each other in a feverish attempt to speed or slow the ascent or descent of their careers.



Howard Dean

"It's a Hobbesian state of nature," Eric Gioia, a city councilman from Queens, said at the clambake, his necktie knotted with a perfect dimple. "It's all about trading up." Gioia was not a delegate—he had come to Boston to meet donors, network, and talk politics with anyone who'd listen—but he had been stockpiling tickets to that evening's Red Sox-Yankees game for months, in the hope that they would prove useful as bartering chips. He managed in the end to exchange some Sox tickets for another scarce commodity—Fleet Center credentials for his staff.

Two sullen objectors—a pair of elderly women—sat smoking on a nearby park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bench, holding "Bush-Cheney" signs.

"The whole media's for Kerry," one of them, named Betty, said. "We're Republicans. We have been since Ford, because he didn't want to bus our kids, neither."

John Hebert, a firefighter and Democratic Party volunteer from North Greenbush, New York, spotted the women as he left the clambake. "What's someone doing with that sign?" he said. "Bush sucks." He circled around behind the women, snatched a sign, and threw it on the ground in front of the delegation's buses. "Am I the king?" he asked, taking a seat on a bus

Betty didn't think so. "Make him pick that up," she yelled, charging the bus and attracting the attention of a cop. "He's very uncouth."

The policeman requested that Hebert step off the bus to apologize.

"I was just kidding around," Hebert said.

"No, you were not," Betty said. "You are an idiot—a New York idiot."

As the convoy pulled away, Hebert held up his middle finger: an Empire State salute. "Hey, folks," he said, "if I offended anyone, I'm sorry. But you know what? It was worth it. Bush does suck."

The transition from comer to also-ran can be quick, if not exactly abrupt; the blandishments of future greatness hang around even after the promise of it has passed. Tuesday was Dean Day, sort of, at the Convention. Everywhere Howard Dean went, in a string of appearances leading up to his speech that night, a crush of camera crews and fans clamored to be near him. Congratulations mingled awkwardly with condolences. "Thank you so much for what you did for the Party," a young woman wearing a "Dean for America" sticker said as Dean made his way out of a breakfast meeting.

"For what?" he replied. "We haven't done anything yet."

The crowd at the next breakfast, a fund-raiser for two Massachusetts state representatives, was full of reconstructed Deaniacs. "Unfortunately, things didn't break the way we wanted them to break," Representative Charley Murphy announced. "But we're here gathering this week to support John Kerry."

A couple from Boston approached a Dean aide. "We're neighbors of John Kerry's, so to speak—which is why we supported Governor Dean," the wife said. They were wearing "Kerry-Edwards" buttons.

Outside, Dean, too, stayed on message. "This is John's week," he said, before climbing into a black van with his younger brother Jim and some staffers. The van passed City Hall Plaza, and Jim Dean brought up William Weld, the former Massachusetts governor and the opponent of John Kerry, eight years ago, in a bitter Senate race.

"He was funny," Jim said.

"He was outrageous," Howard said. "I'm really sorry he's gone."

"People loved him," Howard said. "Remember the time he went to the river, and did a swan dive into the river, after he signed a bill preserving environmental rights? He's living in New York now, and he got remarried."

"Yeah, he's, like, an attorney or something. I just don't understand how he turned it all off, you know?"

Howard appeared to consider the drift of the political afterlife. "He never was into it in the first place," he said. "He got bored with the job."

Barack Obama

"I think he wanted to be President," Jim said.

A few minutes later, in an elevator at the Fleet Center, Dean was spotted by a volunteer, who said, "Big speech tonight, huh?"

"Small speech," Dean said. "But it's in prime time. That's what counts." Prime time on the day the networks had no live coverage at all.

Shortly after 9 P.M., a voice came over the loudspeaker: "Ladies and gentlemen, the man who energized our party." Dean took the stage to a three-minute ovation. "I was hoping for a reception like this. I was just hoping that it would be on Thursday night, instead of on Tuesday night," he said, echoing the remarks of another might-have-been, Al Gore, the previous night. Down on the floor, a man chuckled and said, "Shit happens." Dean was hardly off the stage before a troop of teen-age volunteers emerged from backstage carrying stacks of blue-and-white placards that read "OBAMA."

Barack Obama, the keynote speaker (Kenyan economist's son, Harvard Law graduate, candidate for Senate, war opponent), was by all accounts the biggest success story in Boston, even if his speech wasn't aired live on the networks. By the time he delivered his rousing line, toward the end, about "the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him," people on the floor and in the press stands had fixed on the "Hillary must be pissed" analysis—alternately known as "Obama 2012."

Another young black man, Cory Booker (Yale Law, Rhodes Scholar, Wall Street darling, former Newark councilman), delivered a strong but much less noticed speech that day, at the College Democrats' convention, across town. Two years ago, when Booker was running a well-publicized, well-funded campaign to become the mayor of Newark, he was widely regarded as a young hot shot—White House material, in its rawest form. Then he lost the mayor's race.

"Any Jersey in the house?" Booker began, eliciting a smattering of cheers. "I want to talk about purpose." Speaking quickly, he told a story about personal discovery by way of a housing-discrimination lawsuit—equal parts John Edwards and Jesse Jackson. "Stand up!" he said repeatedly, in an affecting refrain that called to mind Bill Clinton's "Send me" chants on opening night. "Stand up with honor, with courage, with strength, and with love and with love and with love."

They stood up. It was a speech that Booker, who is thirty-five, might have been making in Obama's stead at the Fleet Center, as the official superstar, not merely a still rising (or hovering) star. When he

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finished, he hugged Ashley Bell, the College Democrats' outgoing president—a soon-to-be-rising star, who is now running for the Georgia State House—and exited the auditorium trailed by an adviser carrying a thick stack of business cards that read, "Booker Team for Newark."

"Do you want to be President?" someone asked him in the lobby.

"I want to be mayor of Newark," Booker said.

Event fatigue sets in around Day Three. On Wednesday afternoon at the Four Seasons, the Convention's unofficial boiler room, three Party dignitaries walked toward a private dining room on the second floor for a fund-raising lunch. "I hate to say it," one of them grumbled, "but I can't even remember who it's for anymore. I've been to so many I've lost track."

Late that night, at Avalon, a club across the street from Fenway Park, New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, who is gearing up to run for mayor against Michael Bloomberg, arrived carrying a stress-test card that he'd picked up at a fund-raising breakfast. "You put your thumb here and hold for ten seconds," he said, demonstrating. "Then you compare the colors." Miller's thumb left a greenish imprint, indicating "some stress."

A Britney Spears look-alike began performing onstage, alongside a male dancer. "What is this and when are we leaving?" Miller said. "This is a nightmare."

Nearby, Eric Gioia, the city councilman and dispenser of Red Sox tickets, was still pumped up. He reflected on his position in the political firmament. "I don't want to be a representative for twenty years," he said. "I think I'm more suited to be an executive."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE WAYWARD PRESS
BOSTON TERRIER

As many of their friends and neighbors fled to the Cape last week, the editors and columnists of the Boston *Herald* stayed in their locked-down and semi-deserted city to man the peanut gallery. All week, the conservative tabloid heaped derision, abuse, and questionable scoops on the heads of the Democrats.

Hardly had the delegates arrived when the *Herald* reported that one of the prospective platform speakers, Christie Vilsack, the First Lady of Iowa, had criticized the way blacks, Southerners, and Easterners speak. The next day, the *Herald* splashed the "news" that Teresa Heinz Kerry had referred to the Democratic Party as "putrid" and to Ted Kennedy as a "perfect bastard." And on Thursday, the day of John Kerry's speech, the *Herald* served up the front-page headline "KERRY GIRLS GONE WILD." According to the paper's gossip columnists, Alexandra and Vanessa Kerry were vying for the attention of the Boston-bred heartthrob Ben Affleck, who was turning up at every party in town.

To be sure, none of these stories will be troubling the Pulitzer judges. Vilsack, a literacy advocate, made her comments about language, which the *Herald* quoted selectively, in a series of newspaper columns she wrote ten years ago. Heinz Kerry's remarks were even mustier; she made them in 1975, when she was married to the Republican John Heinz.

The Boston *Globe*, a liberal broadsheet that is part of the New York Times Company, didn't pick up on any of its rival's newsbreaks. In an editorial, it opined that the citizens of Boston were fortunate to witness "this incomparable show in all its sprawling, controversial, and inspiring magnificence"—an assertion that made Ken Chandler, the top editor at the *Herald*, laugh.

"The *Globe* is a *Times* wannabe, but it can't quite pull it off," Chandler said last week, as he sat in his office. "We are just trying to extract some news from an event where there isn't any. We knew that the *Globe* was going to give it a big blow job. If I produced a newspaper as boring as the *Globe*, I'd kill myself."

Chandler, a tall, unflappable Englishman, is in his second stint at the *Herald*, which he also edited in the eighties. Between 1993 and 2002, he edited the New York *Post*. For many years, Rupert Murdoch owned both the *Herald* and the *Post*. In 1994, Murdoch sold the *Herald* to one of his executives, Patrick J. Purcell, who is still the publisher. When Chandler returned to the *Herald* last year, he brought with him some of the *Post's* rabble-rousing instincts. A picture of John Kerry dressed like a condom during a visit to NASA appeared on the front page last week, with the caption "Bubble Boy," but the Convention speeches by Bill Clinton, Ted Kennedy, and John Edwards were relegated to the paper's inside pages. Barack Obama, whose barnstorming address thrilled the delegates, was awarded four short paragraphs of copy—by the Associated Press.

"Somebody's got to be the conservative paper in this town," Chandler went on. "They don't make them more liberal than the *Globe*. Boston isn't a Republican place. On the other hand, people here are quite conservative, with a small 'c.' "

Although the *Globe* is a much bigger, wealthier paper than the *Herald*, its strength lies in the suburbs. Inside the city limits, the *Herald*, which has a total circulation of about two hundred and fifty thousand, outsells the *Globe* on newsstands. If the *Globe* represents Boston's desire to be taken seriously as a major center of art, commerce, and learning, the *Herald* embodies some of its older traits: parochialism, truculence, and hostility toward anything it regards as showy or false.

Martin Baron, the *Globe's* editor, reacted angrily when told of Chandler's comments. "Our coverage of the Convention was lively; it was thorough. We covered the event. They hardly covered it at all. Folks at the *Herald* can bloviate all they want, but the truth is that a lot more people in this region buy the *Globe* than the *Herald*."

As the Convention wound down, the *Herald* decided that the biggest story coming out of it was the lack of business around the Fleet Center ("THANK$ FOR NOTHING, DNC. EMPTY EATERIES, EMPTY PROMISES"). By the end of the week, Howie Carr, the *Herald's* self-styled voice of the common man, was practically ordering the Democrats home. "It is imperative to get these 5,000 free-loading delegates out of town before they discover the location of the nearest welfare office," Carr wrote. "These people are crazy. And cheap."

On Friday morning, the headline on the *Herald*'s front page read: "BOSTONIANS, WHEREVER YOU ARE . . . IT'S SAFE TO COME HOME."

—*John Cassidy*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
CASH KILLS

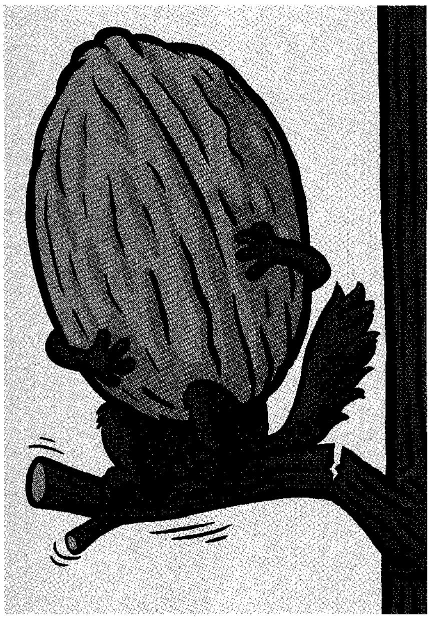
Americans, we're constantly being told, have forgotten how to save. We have two trillion dollars in consumer debt and a national savings rate of just two per cent, and the government, after a brief experiment with thrift in the Clinton years, has resumed its profligate ways. There is one glaring exception, though: American corporations, a group that in the past few years has learned to salt away its gains. Microsoft is at the head of the class; its sixty billion dollars in savings make it the richest company in the history of the world. But a host of other companies are sitting on giant piles of cash, too. Exxon Mobil, Hewlett-Packard, and Intel have more than ten billion dollars each in the bank. If you add up the savings of all the nonfinancial firms in the S. & P. 500, the total exceeds half a trillion dollars, double what it was in 1999, which means that in the past five years American companies have banked almost three hundred billion dollars.

They've done it by being skinflints. They have been slow to hire new workers or give raises to the old ones. They've kept inventories low, in order to avoid being stuck with stuff they can't sell, and they've been extremely cautious about investing in new machines or new factories or new ideas. And as the profits have rolled in they have been content, like Scrooge McDuck, to watch the gold pile up and gather dust.

There's nothing sinister in all this. Conditions called for caution. Companies spent too much in the late nineties, and they needed to pull back. The productivity boom enabled them to produce more without hiring more people, and the uncertainty engendered by the September 11th attacks and the run-up to war with Iraq encouraged frugality and patience.

But it's no cause for celebration, either. Forget the old saw that cash is king. When companies hoard, the economy suffers, because the money is just sitting there; capital needs to be invested in order to create wealth. (If you don't shoot, you won't score.) Workers suffer because fewer people have jobs and it's more difficult to get a raise. Shareholders lose, too. They give companies their money in order to get a good return on it. Good returns are harder to come by when companies have billions of dollars languishing in money-market funds that pay one per cent a year—the corporate equivalent of money under a mattress. If a company can't find anything fruitful to invest its cash in, it should just give it back to the shareholders, so that they can put it to productive use.

This is what Microsoft, among others, has decided to do. After decades of stockpiling, it announced the other day that it will pay a special thirty-two-billion-dollar dividend at the end of the year—a windfall that may make the wait seem worthwhile. A few other companies have increased their dividend payments, too, but, so far, most are keeping the coffers fully stocked. C.E.O.s argue that the cash gives them flexibility. If an attractive new project comes along, they can move quickly, instead of having to drum up capital in the marketplace.



There are a few industries, such as pharmaceuticals, where this may be necessary. But, in most cases, what C.E.O.s mean by flexibility is freedom—freedom from the scrutiny of lenders and shareholders, freedom from the consequences of bad decisions. Cash can be a cushion, a crutch, a hedge against failure.

By insulating executives from some of the rigors of competition, though, excess cash actually makes failure more likely. It can subvert discipline and encourage waste, much as a trust fund spoils an aimless graduate. History suggests that, the more cash a company has, the more inclined it will be to misuse it. In the late seventies, oil companies found themselves flush with cash as a result of a big spike in oil prices. They dithered, then poured it into exploration projects and acquisitions that brought them headaches and red ink. Similarly, a study of companies that won big legal judgments found that, like gamblers playing with house money, most of them squandered the money on bad bets.

The worst thing about a big pile of cash is that it encourages executives to go shopping. Jarrad Harford, a professor at the University of Washington, looked at the track records of American companies during the postwar era and found that when they were cash-rich they were far more likely to make acquisitions that reduced their value and performance. In other words, they overpaid for things that they shouldn't have bought in the first place. When C.E.O.s these days are asked why they have so much cash on hand, they like to say that they need it for "strategic acquisitions." Unfortunately, "strategic" is often a euphemism for "ill-conceived."

Many economists argue that if C.E.O.s spend unwisely it's because they're more interested in empire-building than in value-building. The bigger the company, the more power the C.E.O. has, and the better his pay. But it's also possible that when C.E.O.s go on shopping sprees they believe they're doing the best thing for their shareholders. Cash, after all, is an indicator of past success, so it has a way of making C.E.O.s think they're smart. In his book "Why Smart Executives Fail," Sydney Finkelstein, a professor at Dartmouth, points to managerial hubris as a cause of corporate debacles. And the management theorists Matthew Hayward and Donald Hambrick have shown that C.E.O.s who get good press are more likely to overpay for acquisitions. Flattery, in other words, is insidious, and cash may be the sweetest talker of all. C.E.O.s need to lash themselves to the mast and give the shareholders back some of the loot, lest they be lured onto the rocks.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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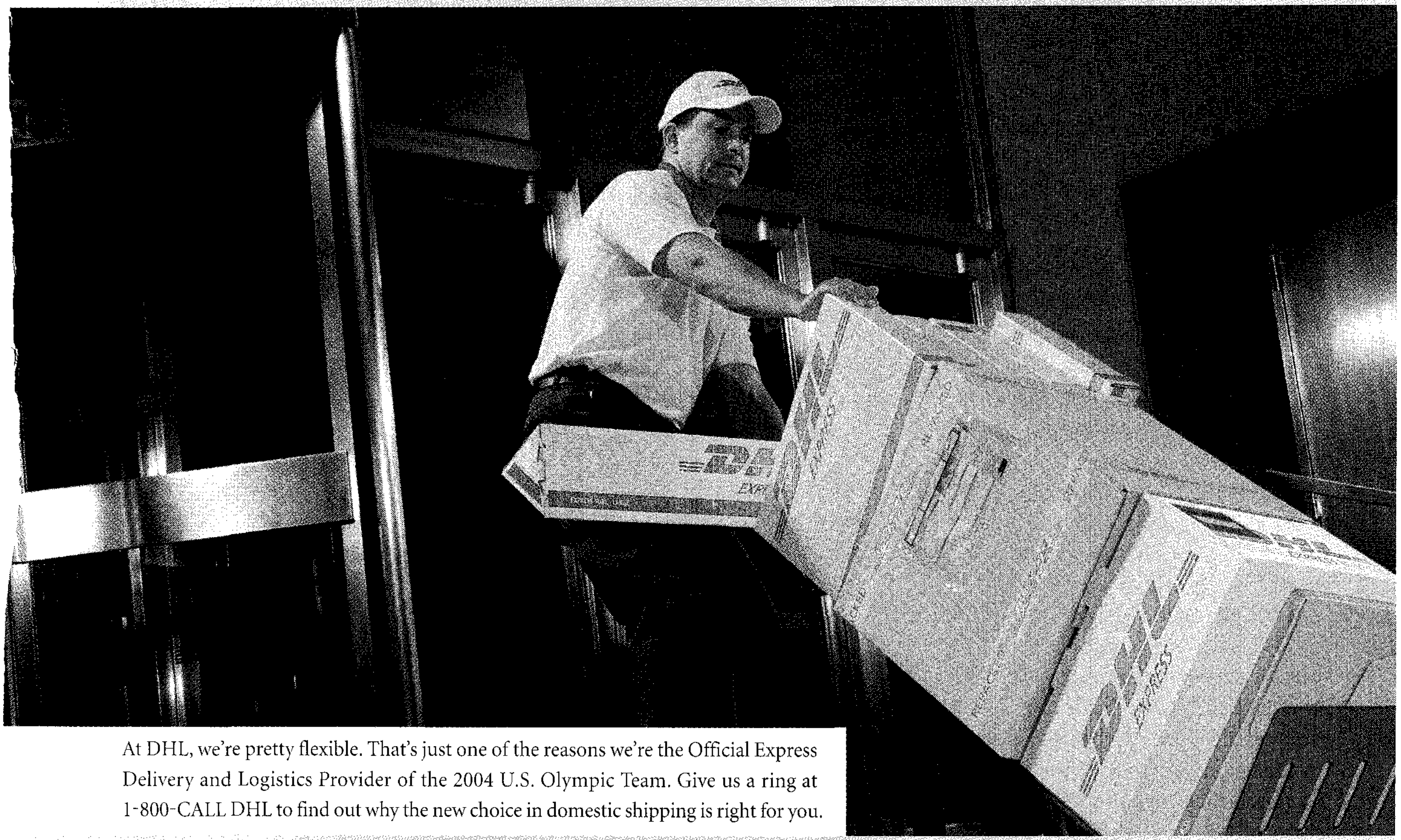

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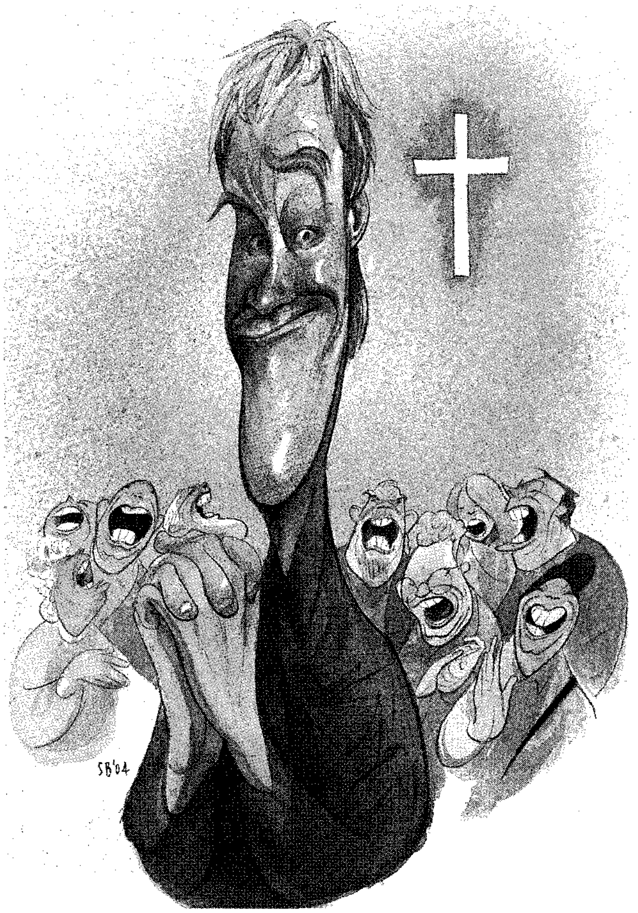
STANDUP FOR THE LORD

How funny can a Christian comedian be?

BY ADAM GREEN

Most accounts of religious awakening feature a dark night of the soul, a moment just before God reveals his grace, when everything looks hopeless and faith seems impossible. For Brad Stine, a forty-four-year-old politically conservative, Evangelical Christian standup comic, that moment came at the end of the last millennium, when his agent and his manager both stopped returning his calls. For more than a decade, Stine (who was nine when he found Christ) had earned a decent living in show business—first as a magician, then as a clean, though not overtly pious, comedian, doing his bits in front of brick walls in clubs across the country. But his career had slackened, and his chances of making it to the big time—the "Tonight Show," his own sitcom—had grown remote. Mired in depression and doubt, he started to question his most fundamental beliefs. As Stine recalls it, "I thought: Jesus, either you're not real or I'm missing something."

Then, one afternoon in the tiny kitchen of a one-bedroom apartment in Las Flores, California, where Stine was living with his pregnant wife and young son, he began to pray. He asked God to take over, to tell him what to do, offering to forgo wealth and fame in return for peace of mind. "It was Abraham and Isaac," Stine told me. "I finally brought the knife down on my life and my career, and said, 'I'm willing to sacrifice this thing. I'm willing to let go of what I love most—my comedy—in order to have God.' "



Jerry Falwell called Brad Stine "a unique dispenser."

STEVE BRODNER

Later that day, he got an offer to appear on a televised Christmas special on North Carolina's Inspiration Network, and he realized, he says, "I was a mainstream artist who wanted everything the secular entertainment industry had to offer, but he—God—had bigger plans." Stine quit the club circuit, found new management, and started working a different set of rooms, bringing what he calls his "progressive, contemporary-style" humor to a new audience. The enthusiastic response showed Stine that he had at last found his calling—that his career had become a ministry. "What these churches are becoming, as venues, is sort of what those comedy clubs were in the seventies and eighties," he told me. "It's this gigantic market of people who literally have never had this before. I've been stinkin' digging for years in this mine, and suddenly it's like—oh-ho-ho-ho—I've struck the mother lode."

Last year turned out to be one of Stine's busiest ever. He played dozens of church dates, at five thousand dollars a show—more than he used to make in a week in the clubs. He recorded his first DVD, "Put a Helmet On!," at the Thomas Road Baptist Church, in Lynchburg, Virginia—or, as he sometimes calls it, "Jerry Falwell's joint." He went on an eighteen-city tour with the Promise Keepers men's ministry. He appeared on Pat Robertson's television show, "The 700 Club," and he entertained at private holiday parties for the staffs of Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, Falwell's church, and Promise Keepers. Recently, there have been discussions about his performing at the Republican National Convention in New York, later this month.

Stine went back on the road this year to try out material for a second DVD. His first gig was in Estes Park, Colorado, a small town about forty miles northwest of Boulder, where he performed at the Y.M.C.A. of the Rockies for several hundred Christian men on a spiritual retreat. His Saturday-night and Sunday-morning shows capped a weekend whose highlights included a lecture by a motivational speaker, Dr. Steve Farrar, called "Men Leading the Charge: God's Game Plan for a Man and His Family," and a series of workshops, among them "Missions Awareness: The Muslim World," whose moderator said, "9/11 is a natural outgrowth of what the Koran tells its followers to do."

As he waited to go on, Stine paced the carpeted floor of a classroom in the auditorium's basement. (The only things that Stine asks for in his makeshift greenrooms are a can of Mountain Dew and a Hershey bar, which he once heard was what David Letterman eats before he goes on the air.) Stine has shaggy, streaked-blond hair and thin, L-shaped sideburns, and he bears a striking resemblance to Denis Leary. He was wearing a patterned knit shirt, untucked, and dark wool pants, with black square-toed shoes. Just before showtime, Stine walked down the hall and peeked inside the auditorium. Hundreds of white men, wearing turtlenecks, flannel shirts, or crewneck sweaters, were holding their hands above their heads, palms up, and singing, "God is awesome in this place," accompanied by a guitar-and-keyboard duo. "Whee—I'm going to put a nice, big damper on the experience they're entering into," Stine said. " 'You're a Christian comedian? Where's your puppet?' If you grew up in the Church, it was not known for its stinkin' high-quality entertainment. A pastor might tell a joke, and it usually began, 'There were these two mules . . .' "

Then it was showtime. Accompanied by pounding rock music, Stine ran out, grabbed the microphone, announced that he was feeling crazy, and launched into his routine. His style is frantic, aggressive, and caustic, with echoes of Robin Williams, Sam Kinison, and George Carlin, who is his comedy hero. His frequent use of the word "stinking" makes you realize how often he would say "fucking" if he didn't work clean.

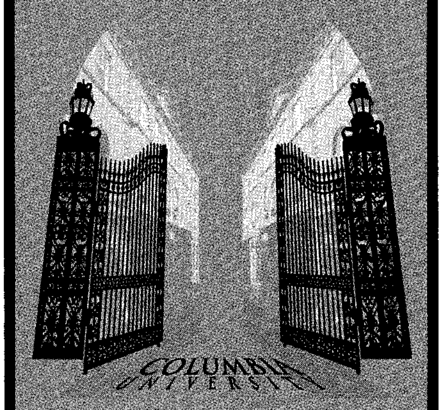
A lot of Stine's material that night came from "Put a Helmet On!," whose title refers to the weakening of the American character caused by such politically correct follies as mandatory helmet laws for bicyclists. Stine longs for the days when Christian values guided the nation and, as he jokes, the homeless were handed axes, pointed toward a grove of trees, and told, "There's your duplex." He aimed most of his barbs at liberals and unbelievers, but Christians took flak, too. He did an impression of a Protestant, whining, "Satan made me lose my job!" ("No—your incompetence made you lose your job!"), and made fun of churches that organize "Harry Potter" book burnings ("Here's a good rule of thumb: If Hitler tried it—maybe go the other way"). A bit about Christians who need tabbed pages to find Genesis in the Bible led to some physical business about an ancient-days evangelist wrestling with a large scroll to keep it from snapping shut.

Stine tried out some new material. Like: "Jesus was an interesting cat, because he was God for thirty-three years, and he only told people about it for three. Don't you think his friends had to suspect something?" And: "One of the great downsides of being a Christian is that my religion forbids me to hate people." Beat. "Ohhhh, I want to hate people. That's what's so amazing about Christianity—it forces you to act against what your body wants to do. I want to hate! Not that anybody comes to mind right off the bat—France." Most of this went over well, though a one-liner about Salvador Dali was greeted with puzzled silence.

Stine's act is built around his rants, which often have the flavor of sermons. He rails against atheists, liberals, Darwinists, pro-choicers, animal-rights activists, moral relativists—pretty much anyone who doesn't believe that the Bible is the literal truth—with a vitriol that seems to tap into his audience's own resentments. "This country is changing," he told the Estes Park crowd. "And there is, in fact, a civil war—of ideology. It's real." Stine said that in the future Christians could wind up being imprisoned just for expressing the ultimate tenet of their faith: Accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour or spend eternity in Hell. "Well, what are you saying—I should just believe in Jesus so I don't go to Hell?" he asked, mockingly. Then he whispered, "Pretty much." This got a huge laugh and a round of applause. "The message of Jesus never changes; the messenger does," he said. "Sometimes he looks like me."

Contemporary Christian comedy's first real star was a self-proclaimed ex-hippie named Mike Warnke, whose act combined jokes, sermons, and hair-raising tales about his past as a satanic high priest. Between the late seventies and the early nineties, Warnke sold more than a million albums. But in 1992 a pair of born-again investigative reporters revealed that most of his stories weren't true, and his career fizzled. The big names in Christian comedy today—Chonda Pierce, Ken Davis, and Mark Lowry—look like the churchgoing suburban moms and dads that they are. Their old-fashioned humor, which consists of mild gibes at Christian family life, musical spoofs, funny props, and inspirational testimony, carries a lingering whiff of the

Einstein did his greatest thinking while walking on the beach.



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fellowship hall and the worship-center rec room.

Stine sees himself less as a Christian comedian than as a comedian who happens to be Christian, one to whom conservative, Bible-believing Americans, who "have never had their own George Carlin," can point with pride. He also considers himself a subversive and a gadfly, in the tradition of Carlin, Lenny Bruce, Richard Pryor, and Bill Hicks. "Christianity has a lot more gray than fundamentalists want to think about," he said. "And I'm exploring the gray. Until I run into black. Or white."

Still, some of his biggest fans are members of the Old Guard. "I think he could even get a Muslim crowd laughing—though he might need a back door to escape," Jerry Falwell told me recently. "He is cutting-edge, not in any way antiquated, and he has a contemporary look. He's totally different from most religious comedians. Mark Lowry, who grew up here in our church, is a very bright boy, but he doesn't try to do the heavy humor that Brad Stine does. Brad is a unique dispenser."

Stine was born in 1960 in Bremen, Indiana, the second of four children. His father, Jerry, was an auto-body repairman with show-business aspirations—as the front man for a combo called the Regents, he sang at local bars and night clubs. He was not particularly religious. Stine's mother, Nancy, was a housewife and a devout Christian. Stine got his first taste of an audience's laughter in kindergarten. He and a classmate had been chosen to improvise a puppet show. His partner opened with "Let's play hide-and-seek," and Stine replied, "O.K., you hide, and I'll start counting—one, three, nineteen, thirty-two . . ." As Stine remembers it, the bit killed.

When Stine was eight, his parents got divorced. Then they got back together, and moved to Southern California, where Jerry hoped to pursue a singing career. The Stines split up again, this time for good, and Brad decided to stay with his father, whom he worshipped. Stine's mother, who had returned to Indiana, sent him a magic set for his thirteenth birthday, and he became an accomplished sleight-of-hand man.

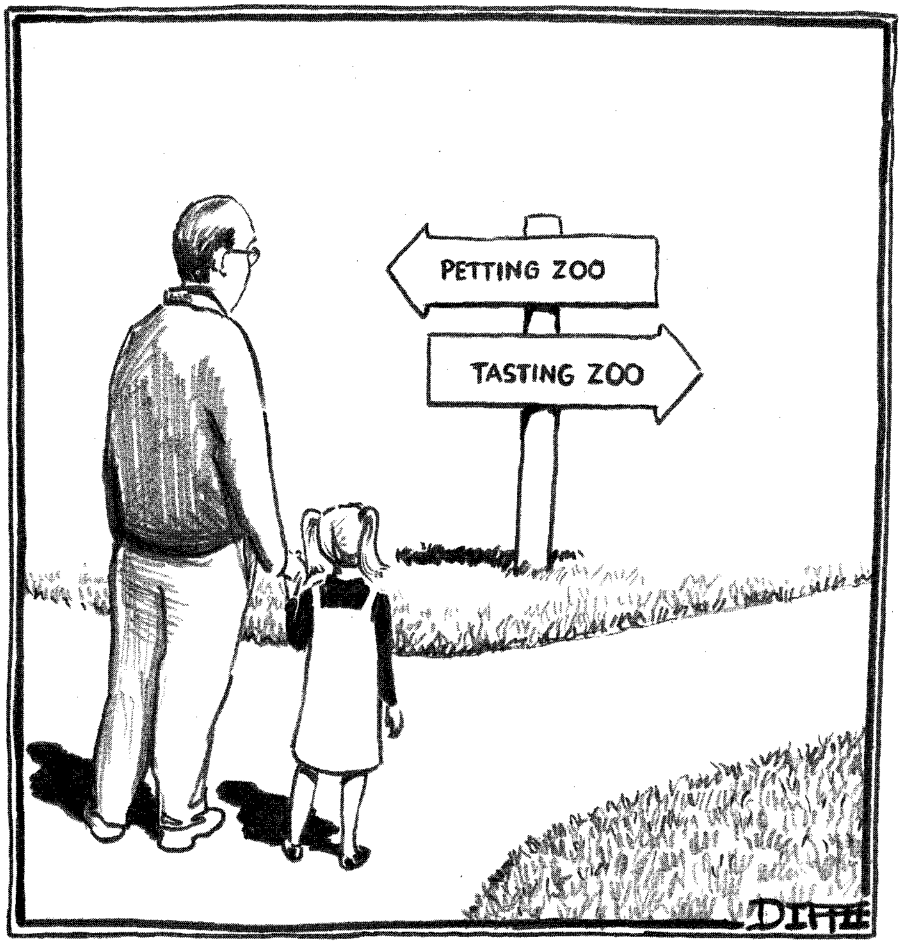
Jerry eventually went into business with his brother Chan, a restless schemer who ran ringtoss and basketball-shot concessions at carnivals throughout the Midwest. Stine joined his father on the road for a summer. He thought they were a team, but then Jerry remarried and went back to fixing cars. "Apparently, I wasn't a priority," Stine told me. "Whatever we had—or I thought we had—ended then."

Stine decided to become a professional magician, and managed to get work doing closeup tricks at bars and restaurants in Southern California. He also started teaching himself sideshow stunts, such as eating fire and chewing razor blades, and he put together a comedy act. Whenever the laughs seemed to be getting thin, he would say, "I'll do anything to make you like me—who wants to see me swallow a sword?" The climax of the routine was a stunt that Stine called "Nose Floss." It involved inhaling a long piece of string up his nose, pulling it out of his mouth, and tugging it back and forth.

In the late eighties, Stine hooked up with a manager named Chuck Harris, who was known for his eccentric client list. (His latest discovery is a man who has had himself surgically altered to look like a cat.) "Brad played a tape of his act for me, and the back of my hair went up," Harris recalled not long ago. "It was the worst piece of crap I had ever seen." But, he said, "I saw the budding of a genius. The man is a genius."

Harris landed his client a spot on a nine-month cross-country college tour with two other young comedians, Craig Anton and Emery Emery. ("It was stinkin' brutal," Stine recalled.) Stine's colleagues admired his manic energy, though Emery resented his boasting that he didn't need to rely on four-letter words to get a laugh. ("I think flossing your nose is every bit as shocking as talking about pounding some cunt in the ass," Emery said recently.) Harris also got Stine his first real comedy-club gig and his first television booking, on Showtime's "Comedy Club Network." But when Harris's assistant moved to a talent agency, Stine followed. Harris was devastated. He told me, "I don't think Brad thought I was *gay*, but he could never understand the great love and passion I had for him."

Stine continued to work, in clubs and on television, but he struggled to define himself as a performer. He dropped the



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props and the magic. He grew his hair long; he cut his hair short. He took acting lessons and auditioned for sitcoms and movies. He even dusted off his sword and his nasal floss. One night, after a club gig, Stine had a drink with another comic, whose act focussed on her identity as a lesbian. When he told her that he was a Christian, she said, "There's your hook."

These days, Stine's career is under the guidance of Mike Smith, an avuncular Oklahoman in his mid-fifties, who runs an artist-management business out of Franklin, Tennessee, a well-heeled suburb of Nashville. Smith handles contemporary Christian entertainers, among them a "rap core" quintet called 38th Parallel, whose music fuses heavy metal and hip-hop with a Gospel message. Smith oversees every aspect of his artists' careers, from their wardrobes to their personal development as Christians. "I'm basically representing ministries that deliver the Gospel in unique ways to people who might not otherwise receive it," he told me over lunch recently.

Smith had Stine meet with Jerry Falwell, who gave him his blessing to tape a live show at his church. Then, instead of approaching one of the "big three" contemporary Christian labels, Smith released the edited result, "Put a Helmet On!," on his own label, Perpetual Entertainment, whose motto was "Worship is a lifestyle." So far, "Put a Helmet On!" has sold about forty thousand copies.

Next, Smith got in touch with the Promise Keepers men's ministry. Started in the early nineties by a former University of Colorado football coach, the group holds cathartic, rock-and-roll-driven conferences (they don't like the word "rallies") at arenas around the country. Men are urged to reclaim their roles as leaders of their families and "take back the nation for Christ."

The Promise Keepers tour last summer introduced Stine to as many as fifteen thousand keyed-up Christian men at a time, in many crucial regional markets. In the fall, Stine went back out and played church and meeting-hall gigs in the suburbs and rural areas outside these same cities. This time, men who had seen him at Promise Keepers events came with wives, children, friends, and other members of their congregations.

To help harness the marketing power of the Evangelical grapevine, Smith brought in a booking agent named Charles Dorris, the head of the Christian-entertainment division at the William Morris Agency, which has had an office in Nashville since 1973. He also hired Bob Elder, a seasoned "life-style Christian" marketing consultant. Elder told me that his job is to look at the market and ask himself, "Where's God moving in product?"

Smith points to Christ's injunction, in Matthew, to be the salt of the earth, and cites a book by the late sports-television executive Bob Briner called "Roaring Lambs," which has become something of an industry bible. Briner takes Christians to task for hiding out in a religious ghetto rather than going forth into the mission fields of mainstream arts and entertainment. "We all live in this little thing that we've developed here, and we've built walls around us," Smith told me. "And every once in a while we'll lob a hand grenade over the wall—protest an abortion clinic or shoot a doctor or something like that—but we're not impacting culture."

Two years ago, Stine moved his family to Brentwood, Tennessee, an affluent bedroom community about fifteen minutes from Nashville. Stine, his wife, Desiree, and their two kids, Wyatt and Maycee, live in a thirty-eight-hundred-square-foot neo-Colonial on three-quarters of an acre. When Stine and Desiree met, in the early nineties, she was working as a bartender in Laguna Beach and, though a Christian, was deeply into astrology. Stine had just reached the end of what he calls his prodigal journey—drinking, chasing women, smoking dope. These days, he sometimes has a few glasses of wine with dinner or a pint of Guinness after a show, but otherwise, Desiree told me, "he is so stinkin' holy it's disgusting." Desiree is dark-haired and attractive. Before she met Stine, she spent five years with Wild Mick Brown, the drummer for an eighties hair-metal band called Dokken. This prepared her for being married to a "road dog and moody artist like Brad."

Stine is an avid and eclectic reader. He owns several editions of the Bible, including "The Message," a modern paraphrasing that renders, for example, the familiar words of Psalm 66, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands," into "All together now—applause for God!" He also owns books about theology, such as C. S. Lewis's "Mere Christianity," and about politics, such as "Death by 'Gun Control': The Human Cost of Victim Disarmament." But most of his shelf space is devoted to books about magic, magicians, and sideshow performers: "Magic by Misdirection," "The Odds Against Me," "Circus of the Scars."

For a while, the Stines attended the People's Church (formerly First Baptist) in nearby Franklin, whose five thousand members can worship, see a production of "Godspell," go to singles events or divorce support groups, or meet for a latte on its hundred-and-twenty-acre campus. Desiree joined a Bible-study group and started to become part of the church community. But her husband has never felt comfortable in megachurches and prefers his religion intimate and unadorned. Back in California, Stine went to a small nondenominational church in Orange County, whose senior pastor had run topless bars in Hollywood before he was saved. Stine described it as "just the Bible, Jesus, and you."

Stine doesn't hang out with Nashville's other Christian comedians, nor has he joined the Christian Comedy Association. He's trying to do something new and doesn't want to be lumped with the others. Stine told me that his life is sometimes lonely, that he feels like an outsider both in the mainstream and among fellow-Christians. The payoff will come when he's backstage at the "Tonight Show": he'll take out an old nightclub shot of his father, who died six years ago, and say, "Well, Dad, we made it." But, as Stine told me many times, he is battling a "liberal-biased media-entertainment structure." He figured that after having proved himself as a standup for nearly two decades, the only conclusion he could draw from his not being asked onto the "Tonight Show" was that the powers that be were determined not to give airtime to anyone with a conservative or Christian message. I noted that for most of those years Stine had kept his religious and political views to himself. Stine conceded that I might have a point and said that if he gets to perform at "the stinkin' G.O.P. Convention," the "Tonight Show" brass will have to pay attention.

Throughout the winter and spring, Stine went on the road and refined his new act. He was accompanied by a wry, efficient young man named J. R. Montes, who used to manage a band called Zona 7, which he described as "a Hispanic Christian Linkin Park." In York, Pennsylvania, Stine performed at the Praise Center, a hangar-size nondenominational church and television-production facility in the middle of an open field. He had been hired by a local Christian broadcasting entrepreneur, talk-show host, and weight-loss-formula salesman named Jerry Jacobs, who didn't appear to be a regular user of his own product. Jacobs was hoping to interest Stine in his plan to produce a late-night comedy show, which, he explained, would be "similar to 'Saturday Night Live,' only without all the ah-moral tendencies." He said, "I can't say, 'Live from York—it's Saturday night,' because my lawyers told me that wouldn't fly. But I can say, 'We're in York, and we're live, and it's Saturday night.'"

For thirty dollars a head, the crowd at the Praise Center got to eat chicken, watch promotional videos for "The Passion of the Christ" and Promise Keepers, and listen to Jerry Jacobs give a fund-raising pitch for his television ministry. By the time Stine took the stage, they were ready for a few laughs. "Relax," he told them. "You're going to Heaven—enjoy yourselves!" A new bit about Adam naming the animals in the Garden of Eden went over well. So did Stine's pro-Bush sentiments. "I thank God we've got a Texan in the White House," he said. "You'll notice the terrorists didn't attack Texas."

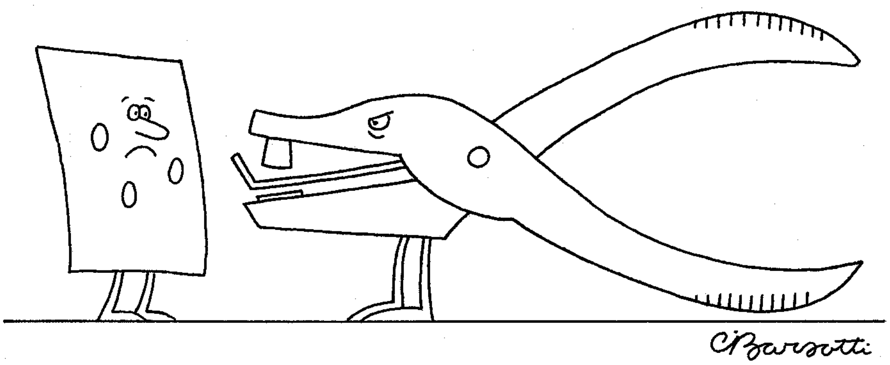
Outside Asheville, North Carolina, Stine performed at the Arden Presbyterian Church. His dressing room had a rocking chair in it and a sign on the door that read "Brad Stine (Tonight, nursing mothers in case of emergency only)." When Stine ran onstage, the audience jumped to its feet and cheered. For the next hour, Stine moved deftly between religious and political rants (he got particularly exercised about the divorce rate among Christians) and comic business, making the transitions with lines such as "And that's the problem with these secular humanists." He also hit a few cultural hot buttons.

Judicial activism: "When they turn around and try to reframe what the Founding Fathers intended for this country, it drives me out of my mind. If Thomas Jefferson were alive today, he'd be *sooooo* . . . old."

The Second Amendment: "Guns don't kill people. Bullets kill people."

Gay marriage: "Guys want to marry other guys?" Beat. "Cowards!"

Stine wishes that his beliefs didn't force him to take positions that sometimes hurt people's feelings, but in the end, he says, "truth trumps everything else." As a comedian, Stine believes that he must expose cant, hypocrisy, and false ideology; as a Christian, he must spell out the dire consequences awaiting those



"Now let's try it again, pal. You got the money?"

who fail to recognize the wrongness of their thinking.

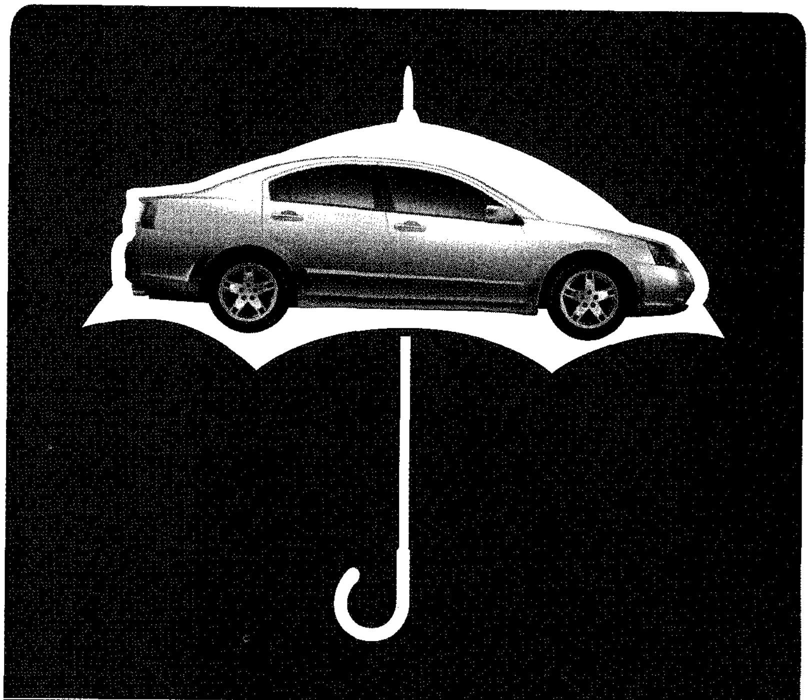
"The reckoning day for people like this is going to be more horrific than we can imagine," Stine told me one afternoon. "And I take that seriously, because I care about people, and I want everybody in. Let's all get along and go to Heaven, where we'll dwell with a loving father—God—who won't leave us, and won't get divorced, and won't do all the horrible stinkin' things we see in this world. Well, I believe it's going to happen. And I want to be there."

Earlier this year, Stine flew to New York for a meeting with the former president of the Gospel Music Association, Frank Breeden, who is now the entertainment director for the Republican Convention, and Stine's agent, Charles Dorris, who is on the G.M.A.'s board of directors. Breeden had already given Stine a boost in 2002 by hiring him to entertain at the G.M.A.'s annual Dove Awards, the Grammys of contemporary Christian music. Now he was talking about bringing Stine back to New York to perform at one of the events or parties connected to the Republican Convention, or maybe at the Convention itself. They also discussed plans for Stine to go to Washington, D.C., to meet with some Republican Party grandees.

A month later, Stine and Mike Smith flew to Washington. In a cab heading toward Pennsylvania Avenue, Stine admitted that he was a little nervous. "This is kind of my 'Tonight Show,' " he said. "These are people who can make things happen for me that I've never even imagined. They're the gatekeepers."

Their first meeting, at a Cosí restaurant near the White House, was with an assistant from the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives named Catharine Ryun. Then, in the Hart Senate Office Building, they met with Mark Rodgers, the staff director for the Senate Republican Conference. Later, Rodgers, a protégé of Senator Rick Santorum, of Pennsylvania, told me that he became interested in Stine after his brother-in-law played "Put a Helmet On!" at a family gathering.

Stine and Smith met me for dinner at the Capital Grille, a clubby steak house on Pennsylvania Avenue. Smith—who



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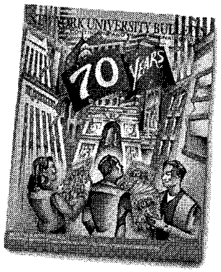

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said, "Man, this place even *smells* conservative"—was in a buoyant mood. He had just learned that Stine would be receiving the Gospel Music Association's annual Grady Nutt Humor Award, named for the late comedian Grady Nutt, who was known as the Prime Minister of Humor on "Hee Haw."

But Stine was more excited about his meeting with Mark Rodgers. He reported that Rodgers had told him, "We can fill you in on the issues and beliefs that are important to our Party and our President, and use you to disseminate our information." In return, according to Smith, Rodgers offered to "network Brad into all kinds of stuff" and to introduce him to some of his intellectual heroes, including Phillip E. Johnson, the author of "Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds," and Chuck Colson, the Watergate conspirator, who now runs a prison ministry. "Watch out, Al Franken," Stine said. "There's a new sheriff in town."

This summer, Stine is back on tour with the Promise Keepers, giving the men thirty minutes of new material and a chance to buy his new DVD, "A Conservative Unleashed," which he shot in April, in Knoxville. The cover shows Stine clutching at a microphone as he is being yanked offstage by, one assumes, the liberal entertainment élite. Both the DVD and Stine's first book, "Being a Christian Without Being an Idiot: Ten Assumed Truths That Make Us Look Stupid" (which was vetted by Promise Keepers board members), are being distributed by divisions of Warner Music Group.

Sales of the DVDs—and of T-shirts and baseball caps—have been brisk at Promise Keepers events. The organization has started to provide Stine with two bodyguards, who flank him as he signs autographs. In Albany in early June, amid all the guys lined up to meet Stine was a sober-looking middle-aged man who handed him a DVD to sign and said, "My name is John Rowland. I'm the governor of Connecticut, and I'm a big fan of yours." (This was a few weeks before Rowland resigned.)

In his set, Stine hit some familiar notes. "I'm a conservative, I'm a Christian, and I think the United States is the greatest country that has ever existed on the face of the earth!" he shouted, provoking one of four standing ovations. "And, because of those three belief systems, when I die, by law, I have to be stuffed and mounted and placed in the Smithsonian under the 'Why He Didn't Get a Sitcom' display."

As it turns out, Lou Weiss, the chairman emeritus of William Morris, watched Stine's DVD not long ago and said that he'd "never seen anything as out-of-the-box as this young man." Weiss, who started in the mailroom at William Morris in 1937, has handled Joey Bishop, Buddy Hackett, and Alan King, among others, and he helped launch Bill Cosby's television career. Now he wants to build a sitcom around Stine, as a put-upon Everyman. The star's Christianity, Weiss says, will not take center stage. "I respect everybody's beliefs," he told me recently. "But putting religion jokes on television is a good way not to be on television anymore."

Weiss's view fits with the election-year marketing strategy of Stine and his team, who want to emphasize Stine's politics more than his religion. Stine has chosen to distance himself from Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, not because he doesn't respect them but because their names suggest evangelical intolerance. The entertainment lineup for the Republican Convention won't be announced until later this summer, but Stine is still in the running. And there has been talk of sending him out this fall to stump for President Bush. "I've got the ear of the White House—or at least the ear of the people who have the ear of the White House," Stine said. "This is much more than I ever anticipated when I thought I could learn how to swallow a sword."

Stine has faith that his journey is being guided by the hand of Providence. He addresses this subject in one of his new routines, which makes fun of bumper stickers that read "GOD IS MY CO-PILOT." He says, "I think a good rule of thumb is, if God's in the car, Let. Him. Drive. He's got insurance. He can talk his way out of tickets. He can knock the radar gun back a couple of notches—nobody'd know." He goes on, "'*God is my co-pilot*'? For crying out loud, this guy is taking charge, and he's toting God around, like God couldn't handle himself!" Then, for the punch line, Stine does his God impression: "You take the wheel—I'm not familiar with this area." ♦

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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, SEVEN MONTHS LATER

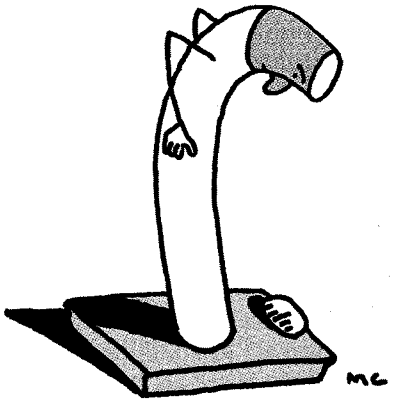
BY ANDY BOROWITZ

Resolution No. 1: *I Will Quit Smoking*

On New Year's Day, I started using nicotine patches, nicotine gum, and nicotine lozenges but stopped when I began to hallucinate that I was a Lucky Strike. January 2nd brought a new, less arrogant resolution: "I will smoke only cigarettes I did not pay for." Unfortunately, I hadn't anticipated how easy it would be to steal them at the 7-Eleven, especially when the girl behind the counter was on her cell phone trying to cast a vote for "American Idol." Seven months later, I'm actually smoking slightly more than I did last year, but that may be because I'm more focussed on trying to quit stealing.

Resolution No. 2: *I Will Lose Thirty Pounds*

Successful dieters say it's not what you eat but how much you eat that counts, which is why, back in January, I resolved to eat only while driving. After all, there's only so much you can shove into your mouth when one hand is on the wheel and the other is holding a cigarette. I guess we'll never know whether my diet would have worked, since on January 3rd I drove my Sentra into the display window of a roofing-supply store in Long Island City. Since then, I've actually gained about five pounds, most of which I chalk up to the nervous eating I've been doing while awaiting my trial. On the positive side, now that I have to walk everywhere it's only a matter of time before my unsightly love handles are ancient history.


MICHAEL CRAWFORD

Resolution No. 3: *I Will Be Nicer to My Co-Workers*

I've never exactly been Mr. Popularity at work, but I've never been Mr. Unpopularity, either. (That would be Dale, especially since I spread the rumor that he, and not I, was the one who had been stealing everyone's yogurt out of the refrigerator.) Still, I resolved to be a little nicer around the office, as this January 4th exchange with my co-worker Barry demonstrates:

ME: Hey, Barry, how's it going?
BARRY: Real busy—got a big presentation tomorrow and I'm nowhere near ready.
ME: Oh, well, let's have a pity party.
BARRY: What did you say?
ME: See ya—wouldn't want to be ya!

O.K., so maybe I could've been nicer than that, but if being nice means sucking up to self-important shits like Barry I'd just as soon ditch this dopey resolution altogether.

Resolution No. 4: *I Will Stop Sneaking Up Behind People and Poking Them with a Sharp Wooden Stick*

I did this only three times last year, so it's a reach to call it a "habit." And yet, those three incidents, plus the time I spent online shopping for just the right stick, constitute a troubling pattern of behavior. Here's the good news: so far this year, I have sneaked up behind only one person and poked him (Barry, on January 5th), so, at that rate, I will do it only twice this year—well off last year's pace. The bad news is that these incidents could pick up in frequency during the cold-weather months, when it's easier to conceal a sharp wooden stick under a heavy overcoat. But even if I wind up poking, say, four or five people, total, this year, I'm not going to beat myself up about it. What with all the other resolutions I've made, this is one of the few simple pleasures I have left. ♦

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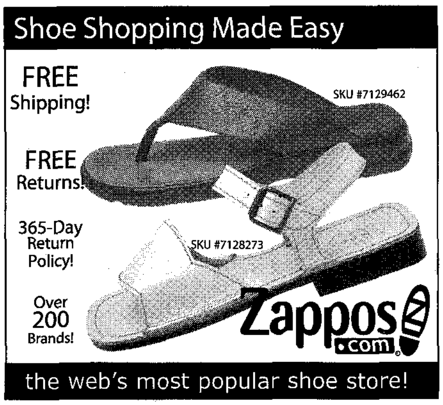
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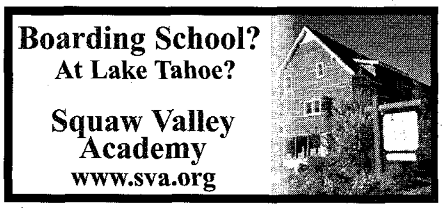
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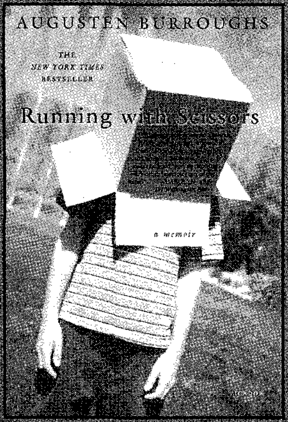

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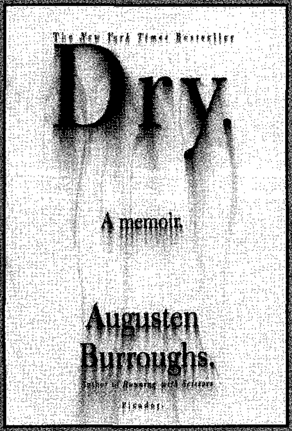
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GETTING THERE

Lost and found on a forgotten golf course.

BY ROGER ANGELL

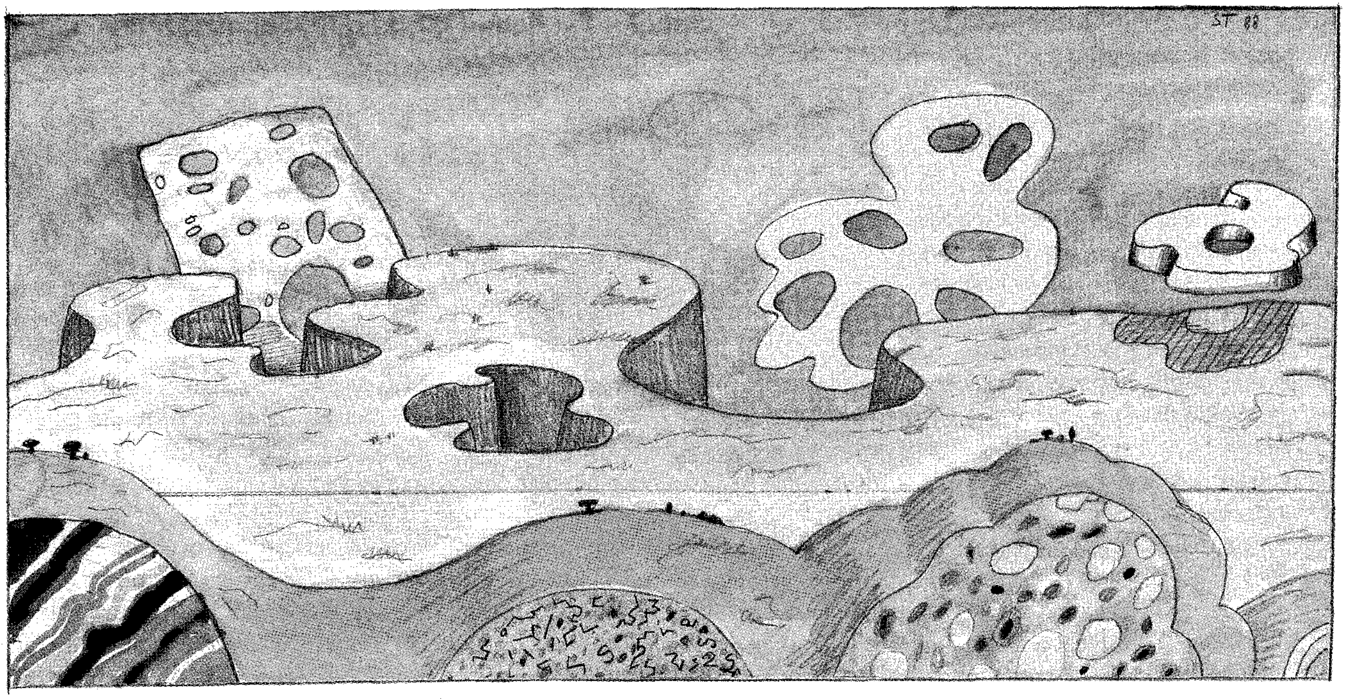
Late one night in the summer of 1937 or 1938, a young man at a party—a cheerful fellow named Charlie, the older brother of a girl I'd once been seeing—came into the room where I was, looking for the girl he had brought and was now ready to take home. This was in a house on Parker Point, in Blue Hill, Maine, and the smoky, pretty room was full of young people I knew or almost knew—most of them part of the Blue Hill crowd, but with enough of my sixteen- or seventeen-year-old summer friends from nearby Brooklin in among them to make me feel at ease there, along about midnight. Charlie was from East Blue Hill, not my bunch, but I knew who he was looking for. "Anne? Light of my life?" he said, looking amiably and perhaps a little drunkenly around at us. "Figuratively speaking, light of my life, where are you?" There was some laughter at this, and in time Charlie found Anne—Anne Nevin—and the two said good night and went off together, as they always did. I've forgotten the rest of the evening, but I can still hear the tone of Charlie's question, which came back to me later that night, after I'd got home. Its ease and style—what I would think of in time as cool—dazzled me; I couldn't get over it. Charlie was older, perhaps twenty. I didn't envy him or want to be him, but the moment became one of those flashes which light up the long hallway stretching down the later teens to the door that opens out into adulthood. It promised that what lay ahead for me and others my age was a new life in which we would talk to each other, we young people, in these confident and amusing tones, within an intimacy shared by men and women who were ready for each other now, and eager to find the easy sensual laughter and affectionate idioms and grasped shoulders and wrists and playful glances that would come with our main preoccupation over the next few years. Romance and sex and love itself were almost at hand, and with them the discovery of what sort of men and women we would become, to ourselves and our friends, and, up beyond that, within our marriages and new families.

"Light of my life?"—would I ever be as easy and joyful as that? The delectable question turns to a wisp as we look at it across this stretch of years. It would not occur to young sophisticates today, who are given little time for yearnings before being knocked flat by the rush and crash of experience.

Another passing question that has stuck with me came five or six years later on a narrow staircase connecting some upper stories of the imposing red roofed stone headquarters building at Lowry Field, in Colorado. College has come and gone, it is the fall of 1943, wartime, and I am an Air Force corporal, most recently an instructor in machine guns and power turrets at the Lowry Aircraft Armament School but now converted to an official historian, of all things. Somebody at the Pentagon has decided that decent records should be kept about these suddenly overcrowded tech schools that are mass-producing trained personnel to maintain the floods of new bombers and fighter planes headed for the European and Pacific theatres, and has tapped its service records for young noncoms who were college English majors and perhaps can write. On this afternoon, I am going upstairs in search of some files stored in a dusty space under the roof. Ahead of me is a civilian employee in our office, a woman named Bettye, in her middle or upper twenties, and, just behind her, my boss, Tech Sergeant Maury Caples, a cheerful, informal thirty-odd-year-old type, not long ago in the advertising business in Cincinnati. Tromp, tromp we go, we three, when Maury, a step or two below the girl, says, "Have you had your Christmas goose yet, Bettye?"

"No," says Bettye, "but I think it might be coming soon."

"Nothing like a little goose for Christmas," says Caples, as we arrive, laughing together and a little out of breath. I am a married man—I've been married for a whole year now—but the bright-eyed look, a loaded glance, these two have just exchanged is outside my experience. Are they *sleeping* together? Isn't Maury married, like me? Is something happening between them, or is this just the way grownup men and women can talk sometimes when they trust each other? The last possibility is almost the best. I've grown up a little, myself, right on these stairs. Wow.



SAUL STEINBERG, "UNTITLED" (1988), ©THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION

Getting there, becoming my adult self, was not a steady goal in my scattered youth, and changes in me, when they came, took me by surprise. Who would expect such a thing to happen on a golf course? Let's reverse directions and go back a few summers again, back before the war to a morning in late August, 1940, when I'd joined my hacker friends Freddy Parson and Bus Willis for another round, there in Brooklin. Where we played was an unfenced but privately maintained little nine holes, right in the middle of town, with bumpy, pasturelike fairways and sunburned greens, where each hole supported an old-style iron flagstick, twisted with years of use and cool to the touch. The shallow, undemanding traps had long since gone to gravel, but lichen-crusted granite ledges, here and there intruding upon a fairway or rising more boldly, like silent onlookers, to one side of a green, offered a greater threat to your score. There was one par five, a fall-away meadow that terminated in a natural bowl, where the strip of rough beyond the green was bordered by knee-high clumps of ball-swallowing ferns. Pinewoods threw their morning shadows almost to the middle of the narrower fairways, and by five-thirty or six on August afternoons began to repeat the process from the other direction. The course started at roadside, just beside the narrow two-lane macadam of Route 175, and at its farther end skirted the inner shore of our harbor. Sometimes, bent almost double under the limb of a hackmatack while I tried to extemporize an irritable slash at my Kro-Flite, nestled dangerously close to a root, I would peer out toward the green and catch a flash of rippled sunlight from the Reach beyond. Other days, again in the rough, I would straighten up to brush a twig or a bug out of my collar, and find myself monitored by a motionless gull twenty feet away, with a bit of mussel shell at its feet. It was a great seven-iron course, perfect for old gents and free-swinging teen-agers perpetually and hilariously in trouble.

Here, on a clear morning sixty-four years gone, a green Ford pulled up beside the grass shelf that constituted the first tee, and we friends were inspected by a young woman with short reddish hair and a grave stare. "Hi," she said. "Any way a person could pick up a game around here?" Without waiting for an answer, she backed up her car and slid it deftly between my ancient Plymouth roadster and the Parsons' station wagon. As she got out and pulled her clubs from the back seat, we eyed each other uneasily. We were young men in mid-college, just sprung from summer jobs in the city, and thought ourselves a suave bunch. While our casual, pickup rounds often included girls or girlfriends, or even sisters, this was our game, made exclusive by a shared age and ineptitude.

"Hi," she said again, dropping her bag next to ours. She told us her name, and the family she was staying with, out on Naskeag Point, who'd said it would be O.K. for her to just come over like this and horn in. She paused, watching us. "Now I'm not so sure," she said.

We collected ourselves and told her our names. Of course she could come along, Freddy said, but we were only duffers. Bus shook her hand and said he'd just figured out who she must be—and mentioned the name of her fiancé. Didn't he play golf?

Not this week, she told us—he was away and she'd been invited up to get to know the family. She said it lightly.

"I'd be here if I was him," Bus said.

I didn't know the family or their place, but Bus did and even knew how to talk to a self-possessed young woman in her middle twenties—an age that made her as strange to me as any movie star. She wasn't quite beautiful, as I recall; there was something too firm about the line of her jaw, but the way she stood now, looking down the first fairway with her weight cocked easily on one hip and a red tee protruding from between her teeth, was both comforting and exotic.

Perhaps a bit abashed by her own boldness, she said she didn't want to spoil our game. It would be better if she chose one of us to be victim, and to have the two others go first, go on ahead. She didn't want three of us standing around while she fought her way out of the woods. Would that be O.K.?

We agreed, and stood together, suddenly shy before her gaze. "I'll take you," she said, amazingly pointing at me. She asked me to tell her my name again.

I told her, and we two vacated the tee, leaning back against my car together while Bus and Fred teed off—Freddy for once avoiding one of his monster mishits, which had been known to bonk off a farmhouse roof adjacent to our right—and headed down the innocuous par-four first. Glancing sidewise, I noted her stylishly flapped old golf spikes and heavy leather bag, with its three woods and matching irons. The scored, expensive-looking clubfaces were flecked with blackened grass. I was way over my head.

She'd been pulling on a white golf glove, then stopped. "Oh, no," she said. "I keep forgetting." She held up her left hand, which displayed a striking ring on the third finger: a thick little blue-green chunk gleaming within a gold setting. She was wearing a short-sleeved white shirt and a short skirt, with a couple of tees stuck into loops in the top, which she patted momentarily now, looking for a pocket.

"Roger, do you have a handkerchief, maybe?" she said, tugging off the ring. I reached into the hip pocket of my khaki pants and took out a faded, almost decent blue bandanna.

She took it from me, folded it into a long triangle, folded it again, and ran it through the ring. She brought the ends back over each other, making a snug packet, and handed it back. "I'm trusting you—O.K.?" she said. She retrieved the glove she'd tucked under her arm and put it on again, pulling it tight.

I was startled at the assurance and intimacy of the gesture. I took a match folder or whatever it was from inside my left-hand side pocket and stuffed the bandanna in its place, thrilling at the little lump at its center as I tucked it away next to my thigh.

When our turn came, she plucked up an iron and teed off swiftly, finishing her swing with an eloquent slide of the hips at the last moment, so that her lean body seemed to watch the safe flight of the ball. There'd been a click at contact: barely a sound at all. My own three-iron—I'd passed up my driver, which was prone to a low, diving slice—was banged off to the right, as usual, but this time missed the granite shelf out there, which could produce spectacular ricochets. "Shot," she said, picking up her bag. We diverged, and I could hear the rich, clockety sound her clubs made as she walked briskly away, her left hand swinging free.

I sank a lucky putt on the first—eight or ten feet, with the ball bumping and wobbling as it rolled, which happened on these greens—for a five on the hole: five to her four. Possibly we each managed fives on the comeback second, which brought us to the road again, next to where we'd started. Maybe I'd be O.K. We lit cigarettes while we waited for Fred to find his ball, up ahead of us in the marshy right rough of the dogleg third, and I filled her in a little, in response to questions. We were more tennis players, really. We'd grown up here in the summers and had taken up golf early in our teens, because of this handy little course. The owner, a shy man named Donald Parson (Freddy's uncle), let his friends and his friends' friends play here without charge, while he himself turned up only now and then, mostly alone. Sometimes the course stood empty for days on end. None of us had had lessons. We were terrible golfers but not as bad as Fred's older brother Kornie. Kornie was a sketch out here, but a demon sailor who won most of our races. Suddenly sensing the need to account for my pathetic array, I explained that two of my clubs had belonged to my grandfather and the rest—well, I couldn't remember where I'd picked them up. Weirdly, I had only odd-numbered irons—a three, a five, and a seven—along with a thick, garden-tool sort of sand club, plus my putter and stiffish driver. "I should really get organized someday," I said lamely.

She was too good for me, of course, much as she tried to hide it. I lost a ball in the same boggy stretch where Freddy had gone on that third, and took a seven. I half-shanked my drive on the downhill fourth, and when I'd at last rejoined her on the green it seemed to me that she intentionally misdirected her putt, sliding it well clear of the hole. When I wrote down our scores, I trailed her by four or

STANLEY'S FIRST DEATH

The body became a vessel, the rasping breath
its proof, and before him nothing
but that ocean sweep
he travelled over. His spirit
lofted forth, his voice
a long quavering
when the wind permitted, as if
out there somewhere some god
held the string.

He was carried somewhere else, who knows?
then fell back, found
the diligent old body at his desk.

—*Cleopatra Mathis*

five strokes. "Let's just play, shall we?" I said, stalking ahead.

She didn't apologize, but went on with her effortless round, gazing with evident pleasure as we topped the hill again, and the green with its circling birches and low bayberry thickets came into view. I stopped sulking. Never mind the painful difference in our scores, I'd take on a different role here: I'd be her host. A couple of holes later, emerging onto the shelf of a west-facing tee, I named three or four of the cruising sloops and yawls at anchor amid the more numerous lobster boats before us in Center Harbor, and pointed out our modest yacht-club fleet, off beyond the spindle. A handful of broad catboats were beginning to stir at their moorings, to the first breaths of the afternoon's reliable southerly. "Ours is the blue one with the tan deck," I said, pointing. "See?" I sounded like a six-year-old.

Something encouraged me to go on. I was an O.K. sailor, I said, better than my sister. These Brutal Beasts could capsize in races sometimes, but mostly you could sail them home again after a squall, with the main reefed way down, even if they were half swamped. One time, I'd rigged a beer jacket between a stay and the mast and run home under that. I couldn't shut up.

She gestured apologetically at the boats and the long sweep of Eggemoggin Reach and the dark line of Deer Isle at its farther rim. "I don't know the first thing about sailing," she said.

Our game finished too quickly—I loved it by now. I can't remember our scores, but she was better by eight or nine strokes. After our last putts had rattled home, I asked if we couldn't play on for another few holes. No—too bad, but she couldn't, she said, making it sound friendly. Something was on with the family that afternoon. She had become a woman again, a stranger.

She pulled off her golf glove, and when I reached in my pocket for the bandanna the lightness of it gave me a shock. When I took it out—my mouth was open—it was partly unfolded, with no weight to it: nothing at its center. "Jesus," I said. I scrabbled in the empty pocket, then pulled it inside out. Nothing.

Her hand was up to her face. "Roger—you'd never?" she said. She'd gone pale.

"It's just got to be—" I cried, pulling

IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three
uno, dos, tres
un, deux, trois
一、二、三
eins, zwei, drei
אחת, שתיים, שלוש
jeden, dwa, trzy
एक, दो, तीन
moja, mbili, tatu
일, 이, 삼
een, twee, drie
один, два, три
uno, due, tre
unus, duo, tres
يو، دوه، درې

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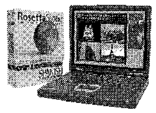

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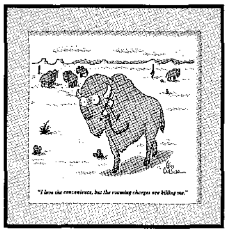

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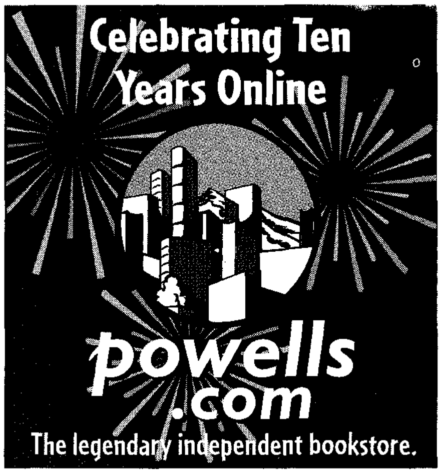
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out my other pockets, madly frisking myself. "I never touched it—not once."

She seized the pocket where the handkerchief had been, shaking it now and rubbing it frantically through her fingers, and in the same instant we saw that there was a fraying along the seam—a place where you could push the tip of a little finger through. She'd folded the ring away but hadn't tied it, and the repeated motion of the packet against my leg while I walked and swung and walked again had worked the weighted thing free and allowed it to drop. It was gone.

She'd begun to make quick little circles around this last green, staring about intently, as if the ring had only now slipped out of my pocket. She made an anguished sound and stared back down the narrow meadowy stretch toward its tee—the way we'd just come—and then off to the left, her gaze sweeping over the rising grassy spaces and the brushy and sloping wood edges we'd walked, now whiter in the midday sun.

"I'm so sorry," I said over and over as we walked back slowly toward our cars. Fred and Bus had finished and gone home. "How could I have—" She held up her hand and I stopped.

"I can't begin to tell you how bad this is," she said. "This is very, very serious. You have no idea. I can't believe I was so stupid."

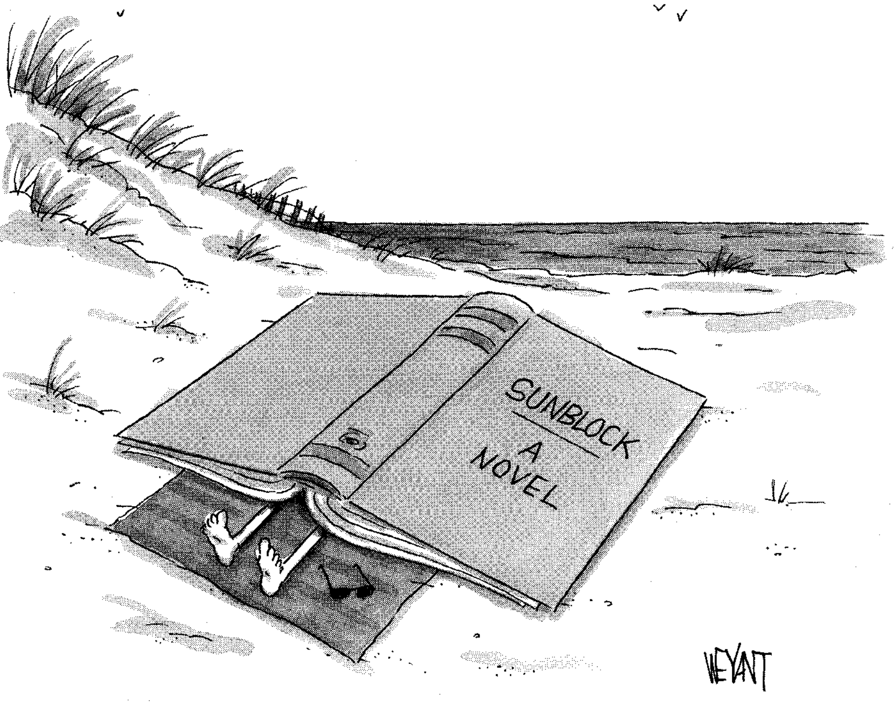
She shook away the cigarette I was offering. She couldn't do anything about this now, not today, she went on. But we had to meet again, she said—come back here and walk over the course again, foot by foot, where we'd gone just now, and find the ring. Every shot, every place we were. Agreed?

I nodded—yes, agreed. For a moment, I thought I might be the one to cry.

She kept shaking her head. "Can't God-damned be-*lieve* it," she whispered. "Jesus H. *Christ!*" She looked at me miserably, staring at my face. "It's all my fault, not yours," she said. "Don't even think such a thing—O.K.? And one more thing: don't tell anybody. Don't tell a single soul. Not your family or your friends. Nobody."

I promised, nodding my head again. She could count on me. We'd meet here at the first tee again, first thing in the morning. Eight-fifteen—no, eight. No one would notice—they'd think we were out there for a fast early round. I'd see her again.

Nobody asked. I'd said "Golf" at lunch with my mother and stepfather and kid brother, but they rarely pressed me for details about my days. Before evening, I went back and walked the first couple of holes again on my own, swinging an iron through the tufts and furrows and sedges where I thought I'd been. If anyone stopped to ask I'd say I'd lost a couple of balls. It came to me that a ring was going to be hundreds of times harder to spot than a golf ball; only a gleam, a moment's flicker from the sun, might give it away. I swivelled my gaze to and fro as I tramped, peering intently at grass roots and pebbly shadows and bits of twig. What a triumph if I could produce the ring for her tomorrow morning, holding it up between my fingers like a jeweller: "*Voilà!*"



It rained in the night, and there was a thick, wet fog everywhere the next morning. I was there first and watched the soft globes of her headlights grow more distinct as she wheeled up quietly, the tires whispering on the wet road. She was wearing red duck pants and an oilskin top, its hood back behind her neck, and when she got out we looked at each other like conspirators. She needs a name here, though I've searched my memory in vain for it. "You sleep?" she said.

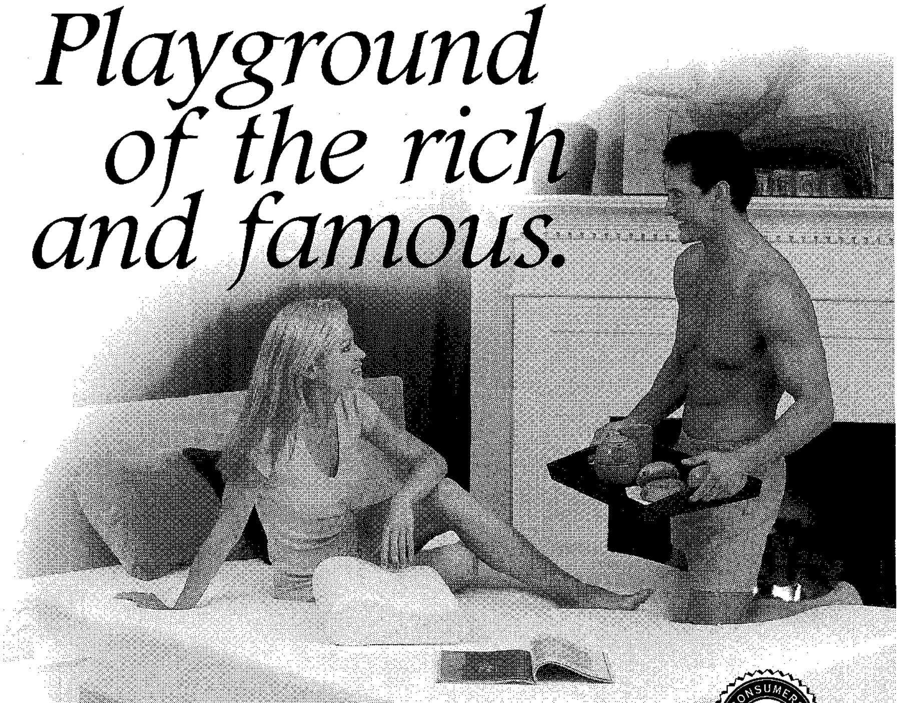
We left our clubs locked in the trunk of my car and set off, each swinging an iron back and forth through the sopping grass in front of us as we walked. Within ten strides the road had vanished. "Over here, I think," I said, angling off toward the right. I led the way to the flat ledge and the junipered rough beyond, where we could look in wider circles. Nothing. By the time we'd jumped the trickly stream below the first hole and walked up the patch of rough, our pants were soaked to the knees, and our hair and shoes speckled with weeds and grassheads. She peered down into the first hole, actually lifting the flagstick—you never know—and we turned away and went on, leaving our trails across the whiter sheen of the wet green.

At the third, we had to visit the bog where I'd lost a ball, then cross the fairway to the edge of the opposite woods, where my next shot had landed. Each bush and branch we touched showered us icily, and when we got back to the edge of the fairway my shoes were making squashy noises. She stopped to pull up one sock, then shook her head like a dog and pulled her hair free of her neck. We scarcely spoke, muted by the hopelessness of our work. Every twenty or thirty strides we had to stop to straighten our backs and waggle our wrists, aching from our ceaseless swashings. Anger thickened inside me—this was insane—but I said nothing. Neither of us could be the first to stop. She’d moved out ahead now; perhaps she didn’t want me to see her face. I didn’t say it, but the fog made it hard to be sure where I was, once I’d stepped off the fairway in search of a reconstructed slice or clunker. The course had gone two-dimensional, a gray page with only the odd birch limb or moldering stump to let me venture a guess.

On the short seventh, we had to climb the steep side of the granite cliff just to the right of the green, where another errant shot of mine had landed amid thick trees. I gave her my hand at the top, pulling her up behind me. There was a touch of breeze off the cove, closer to us now but still invisible in the all-surrounding fog, and you could hear the balsams and the smaller spruce branches beginning to stir overhead. The fog would lift soon. Then we heard another sound, steps and rustlings behind us, and with one instinct dropped to our hands and knees on the crumbly granite together, out of sight. There was the startling *plock!* of a golf shot, back on the tee, then a pause and the softer sound of a ball invisibly striking the green to our right. A man appeared below us, foreshortened, striding out of the mists with a putter and a single midiron in his hand. For a crazy moment, I thought it was her fiancé, what’s-his-name, come to find us, but this was a tanned white-haired man, perhaps in his sixties. He had a canvas sailing hat pulled down almost to his ears and wore waterproof golfer’s pants. I’d never seen him before: some demented rich friend of Don Parson’s who thought he knew this course well enough to play it blind. Perhaps he’d even rowed across the cove from the stone Parson house on the point, and clambered up to the holes here at the back of the shore.

His ball must have rolled off the green after it hit. We could hear him sighing and muttering under his breath as he cast about beyond the green, looking for it, and then a private expletive—*grasht!* or *brasht!* it sounded like—when he gave up and walked away, not bothering to drop a fresh ball for his putt. Perhaps he’d been too intent on his game to mark our path before him through the wet or to wonder why it had stopped.

I was laughing, my hand over my mouth. “God, wasn’t that something?” I



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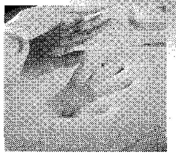

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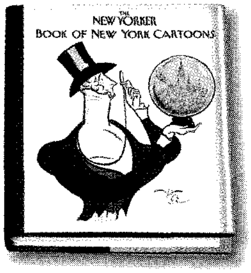

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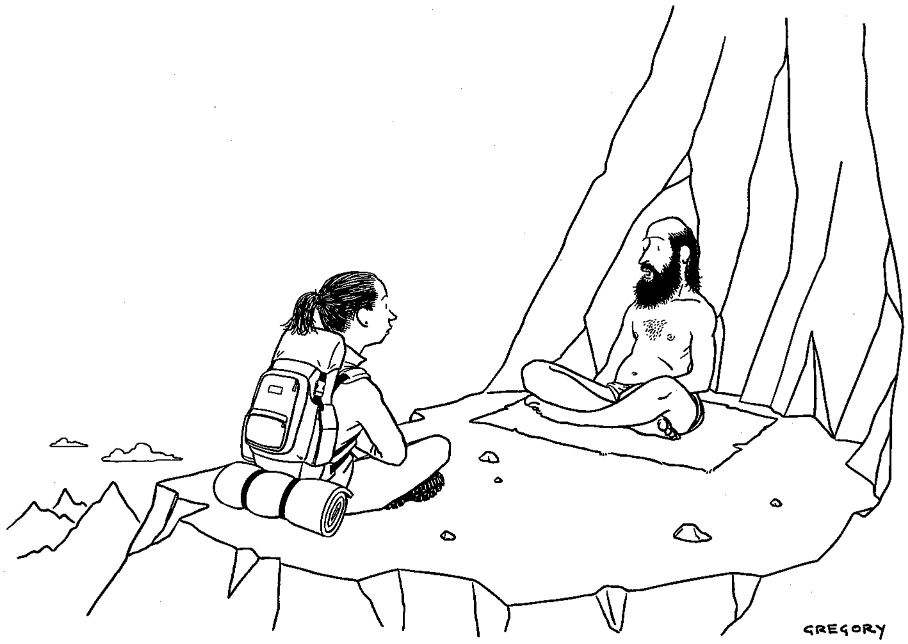


"Have you thought about a boob job?"

• •

whispered. "He never knew. Did you hear him!"

She turned toward me, rising from her knees. "It's no *use!*" she said fiercely. "It's gone forever. This is crazy—we'll never find it. I'm leaving tomorrow and it will never turn up. Now I've got to think of something to tell them. This is all so like me—you have no idea."

I couldn't go on watching her, up so close. I dropped my gaze and saw the minute reddish-blond hairs on her wrist and the backs of her hands. Perhaps the wet on her cheeks was from her dank and darkened hair or from the fog. I must have looked as strange and small to her as she did to me. We were helpless, children on a bad outing. She bent to pick up her iron, and, my heart thumping, I walked away.

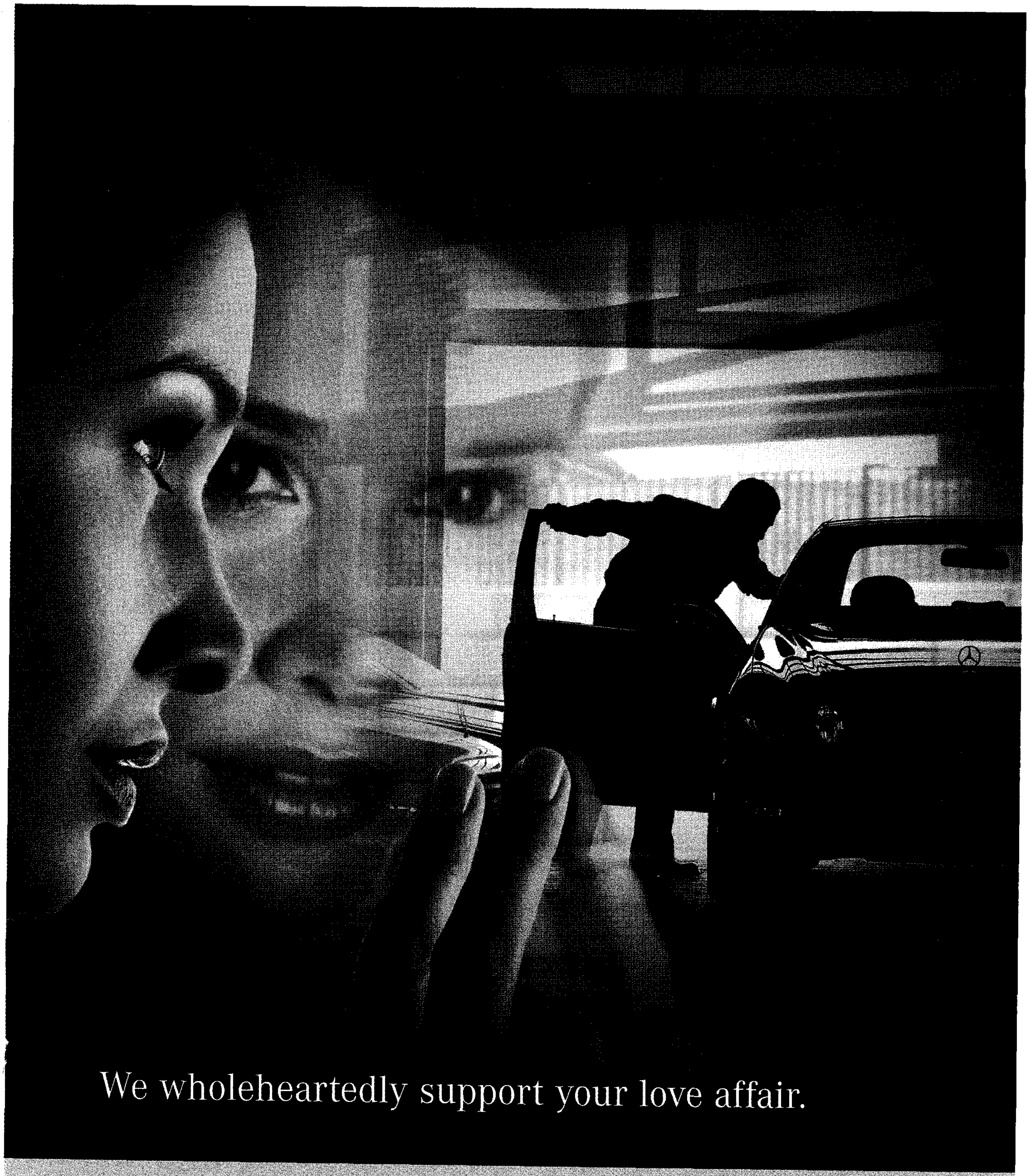
We didn't leave the fairway for the rest of our round, but when we came downhill on the eighth I took out a ball I'd been carrying, dropped it on the green, and putted it, with my iron turned upside down to make a blade. The ball threw up a little wheel of water as it rolled across the green and past the cup. I held out my club, inviting her to play, but she shook her head.

Back at her car, I told her I'd call her fiancé's family if the ring ever turned up: Bus Willis would know how to reach them. She may have given me a slip of paper with her name and address on it. We shook hands once again, then she took hold of my arm, next to my chest, with one hand. "You've been—" she began but stopped. "Everything's going to be fine, Roger," she said. "You know what I mean."

We raced the next day and I did well. Not a win but maybe another one of the little red cotton burgees they handed out in those days—red for second—or a third-place yellow. I used to smoke fifteen-cent cigars during the races then: Blackstones. When my regular girlfriend, Evelyn, came back—she'd been in New Hampshire, visiting her grandmother—I told her that I'd played golf with this woman who'd showed up and asked in, and next day went back with her to look for some lost keys. Fred and Bus asked me how we'd come out that weird day and I said she'd been too tough for me. I didn't tell anyone that I'd driven out to Naskeag the last morning and parked my car near where I thought her new family's driveway might be. She didn't come by. The next year, I had a full-summer job in New York and only got to Maine for a few days, and the year after that the war came and everything was changed. At some point after Evelyn and I were married, I told her about the ring. After the war, the Donald Parson course was abandoned—now there's a patch of alders down where the first hole was, a driveway in place of the third fairway, and a cottage on the granite ledge above the shore. Nobody remembers a visiting young woman who might have lost something valuable on the forgotten old golf course once.

For a time, I wished I'd paid more attention to things she had told me the first day we played golf. She lived in New Jersey, I think, and she'd met her fiancé . . . well, perhaps on Cape Cod. She'd gone to some college in Ohio. But none of that mattered. Our two walks together stayed with me, and felt stranger and more intimate as time went by. I kept losing the image of her, but when I thought of her golf swing she'd reappear. I've grown suspicious of some of the colors and details that have worked their way into this account, which may be overpaintings intended to hold a fading work. I was about to start my junior year at Harvard that fall, but in my version of the story I am younger than that, more boyish; she is the expert and I the apprentice. In time, our morning in the fog became more abstract and significant, almost leaving memory for some other place in my mind. She and I, a strange couple, had had a few hours in common and a secret—something no one else could guess. A woman and a younger man, myself at nineteen, had become intimate by association. I'd done my part, held up. Was this what she'd meant with those strange parting words—that I would grow up and be trusted?

Like everyone else, I travelled a lot during the war, and sometimes I caught myself looking for her in a crowded San Francisco restaurant or among the people pushing onto a downtown Denver streetcar. I was a soldier now, no longer a boy, and if our paths should cross we would meet as equals. In wartime, surprise encounters happened all the time. Early one morning when I was heading home on furlough before going off to the Pacific, my train stopped in a place called Ottumwa, Iowa. I lifted the window shade next to the seat where I'd slept all night, and there was Kornie Parson, in uniform, standing on the platform, six inches away outside the glass. He was a flight instructor at a naval air station there, heading to Chicago for a day at the track. ♦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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE BAD MOTHER

Munchausen syndrome by proxy is a rare, bizarre disorder. Why are so many women being accused of it?

BY MARGARET TALBOT

In 1977, Roy Meadow, a British pediatrician, published an account of two children whose symptoms had, for a time, baffled him. Initially, there seemed to be no similarity between the cases. Kay, a six-year-old, had what appeared to be a recurrent urinary-tract infection. In the course of consultations with sixteen doctors, she had been admitted to the hospital twelve times, catheterized, X-rayed, and treated unsuccessfully with eight different antibiotics. Charles, a fourteen-month-old, had suffered for more than a year with bouts of drowsiness and vomiting, which came on suddenly and without evident cause, and for which he, too, had been hospitalized on several occasions. He would arrive at the emergency room with weirdly high sodium levels in his blood, but his renal and endocrine systems showed no evidence of disease; as Meadow notes in his article, "between attacks, Charles was healthy and developing normally."

Kay and Charles, it turned out, did have something in common. Kay's mother had tampered with her daughter's urine samples to make her appear to be ill when she wasn't. Charles's mother made him sick by feeding him high doses of salt.

Meadow gave this previously unrecognized form of child abuse a name: Munchausen syndrome by proxy, for the eighteenth-century German baron who was infamous for telling tall tales. Doctors had already identified a Munchausen syndrome, which referred to patients who feign illness or harm themselves in order to secure attention and sympathy—unlike malingerers, whose fakery is motivated by material gain (receiving a disability check, staying home from work).

Meadow's landmark article, "Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: The Hinterland of Child Abuse," which was published in *The Lancet*, is a brief, discomfited piece of writing. He clearly finds it awkward to tell physicians that they might be complicit in a form of child abuse, particularly if they order unnecessary, painful medical procedures. He cannot decide whether it is problematic for parents to be allowed to remain at the bedsides of their hospitalized children, knowing that in some cases they might do harm. His explanation for the mothers' behavior is modest, and does not try to resolve apparent contradictions. Shortly after telling his readers that Charles ultimately died from salt poisoning—an autopsy revealed gastric erosions, "as if a chemical had been ingested"—he remarks, without apparent irony, that Charles's poisoner was a "caring, home-minded mother." Indeed, both mothers "were pleasant people to deal with, cooperative and appreciative of good medical care, which encouraged us to try all the harder." He adds, "Some mothers who choose to stay in hospital with their child remain on the ward slightly uneasy, overtly bored, or aggressive. These two flourished there as if they belonged, and thrived on the attention that staff gave to them."

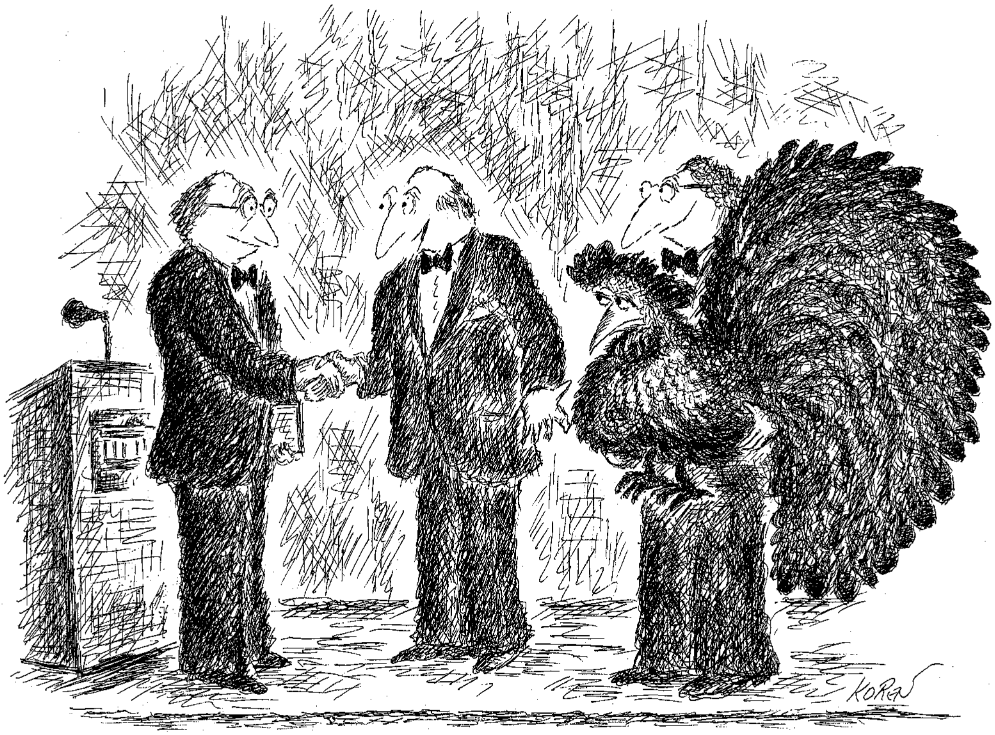
Meadow's deliberately tentative conclusion is that Munchausen mothers "were using the children to get themselves into the sheltered environment of a children's ward surrounded by friendly staff." He leaves as an open question whether the disorder was unknown because it was so rare or simply because it lacked a name.

By defining two instances of abuse as a syndrome, Meadow made a significant diagnostic leap. Since then, a number of writers on the subject have taken an even bigger and more questionable leap: they have turned a bizarre and uncommon form of child abuse into a distinct psychiatric disorder, with its own checklist of symptoms identifying mothers who suffer from it. By now, Munchausen syndrome by proxy, or M.S.B.P., has generated a substantial body of literature—more than four hundred journal articles, and numerous books and essay collections. The *D.S.M. IV*, the latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association's guide to diagnoses, includes an entry on the syndrome, under the name "factitious disorder by proxy."

After Meadow, the physician who has perhaps done the most to draw attention to the syndrome is David Southall, who practices at a hospital in Stoke-on-Trent, England. In the nineteen-nineties, he pioneered the use of covert video surveillance to catch M.S.B.P. abuse in hospital rooms. Other researchers adopted this controversial investigative technique, and British and American TV have broadcast some of these images: blurry black-and-white clips of mothers smothering their babies, who struggle against pillows; a mother disconnecting her daughter's oxygen tube; another jamming her fingers down her baby's throat. These women seemed intent on creating a facsimile of breathing disturbances sometimes associated with sudden infant death syndrome, and counted on a doctor's subsequently reviving their children—an appalling gamble. The thirty-nine abused children in Southall's original study had forty-two siblings, twelve of whom were found to have died unexpectedly. Confronted with the video evidence, four mothers admitted to having suffocated eight of the siblings.

In recent years, Munchausen by proxy has seeped into popular culture, with a rapidity and a fervency that recall the fascination with child sexual abuse in the nineteen-eighties. In the 1999 film "The Sixth Sense," Haley Joel Osment's character discovers that a child has secretly been poisoned to death by her mother. In 2002, Eminem had a hit single, "Clean-

Nicola de Sousa, with Katerina, whom she was accused of harming, and her husband, Eurico. Photograph by James Nachtwey.



"As a way of expressing our thanks, we offer this modest honorarium."

ing Out My Closet," which contains the lyrics "Going through public housing systems / victim of Munchausen syndrome / My whole life I was made to believe I was sick when I wasn't." Last fall, Bantam published "Sickened," by Julie Gregory, the first memoir by a victim of Munchausen abuse—an Ohio gothic featuring a viperish mother, high on the fumes of medical melodrama, who pretends that her daughter suffers from a mysterious heart condition.

Paid experts now regularly testify in court about the syndrome and conduct workshops for law-enforcement officials and social workers. Web sites publicizing the disorder offer checklists and warning signs. And, lately, mothers of chronically ill kids nervously joke—or openly worry—about being accused of the disorder. It is the "omnipresent phantom which lurks around every mother of a child where illness is difficult to diagnose," Helen Hayward-Brown, an Australian medical anthropologist who has studied allegations of Munchausen abuse, has written.

That might sound hyperbolic, were it not for the fact that many M.S.B.P. experts advocate for a high level of distrust toward mothers. The editors of a 2000 book, "Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy Abuse: A Practical Approach," warn doctors that "factitious illness should be considered in any unresolved clinical problems in childhood." Mary Eminson, one of the editors, detects new temptation for mothers in the fact that "medicines are more powerful, operations more heroic, and opportunities for intimate access to children's bloodstreams (through drips or central lines), to their gastrointestinal tracts (through gastrostomy buttons and other stomas and feeding tubes), to their renal tracts (through catheters and urinary diversions) and to their respiratory systems (through tracheotomies and ventilators) are more extensive than at any time in our history." The book repeatedly invokes the dangers inherent in trusting patients—after all, a few do turn out to be malignant fabulists. As the introductory essay explains, "We have to come to terms with the fact that the implicit trust expected on either side of a medical engagement may very well be misplaced."

This call for doctors who treat children to become hypervigilant for signs of Munchausen by proxy is more than a little odd, for the syndrome is, by most estimates, a rare thing. Most experts agree that there are probably about twelve hundred cases of M.S.B.P. a year in this country, from which perhaps a hundred deaths result. Donna Rosenberg, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado, said that, in fourteen years as a forensic pediatrician with the Colorado Child Fatality Review Committee, she saw about one death a year from M.S.B.P. In a 1990 study of 20,090 babies monitored for sleep apnea, the authors suspected—though they did not prove—that fifty-four cases, or 0.27 per cent, were related to the syndrome.

These numbers suggest that M.S.B.P., though horrifying, is far less common than other forms of child abuse. (There are about two hundred and fifty thousand confirmed cases of physical child abuse each year.) And it is also rare in relation to genuine chronic illness in children, at a time when kids are surviving with diabetes, asthma, renal disease, leukemia, and cystic fibrosis. Some Munchausen experts argue that cases regularly go unrecognized. Yet, given the rising awareness of the disorder among doctors, nurses, social workers, school personnel, and angry former spouses with access to the Internet—accusations are now being made in custody battles—it is not surprising that a different problem has begun to emerge: false allegations.

On a chilly afternoon in March, 2002, two caseworkers from the Children's Aid Society in Ottawa arrived at the home of Nicola and Eurico de Sousa and their eight-year-old daughter, Katerina. They said they had received a report of Munchausen abuse: someone at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, where Katerina had been treated off and on, was concerned that Nicola was subjecting her daughter to unnecessary medical interventions, including surgery. This was, on the face of it, a peculiar accusation, considering that Katerina had been born with a welter of serious congenital defects that affected her spine and liver.

Nicola de Sousa, who is forty-five, is thin, fair-skinned, and fragile-looking, with long blond hair and eyes as shimmery blue as a porcelain doll's. She has a fine-grained memory for medical details, and comes across as articulate and high-strung. Eurico, who is forty-three, has a brushy mustache and a genial manner. They are both nature lovers and introverts, who find hiking more rejuvenating when they don't meet too many people along the way. Throughout Katerina's life, they have worked as a team—Eurico, who is a systems analyst at the Bank of Canada, did research on the Internet and prepared long lists of questions for Katerina's doctors; Nicola took her to most of her medical appointments.

The investigation, however, focussed on one parent: Nicola. In an affidavit, Ned Jackson, a caseworker who interviewed her, noted that she "suffered from depression from the ages of sixteen to twenty" and "was presently being treated for depression by her family physician." Nicola didn't work, though she is bright and comes from a family of academics. She volunteered regularly at her daughter's school; according to the affidavit, Katerina's third-grade teacher found her to be overly demanding, and her "presence in class to be disruptive." Another caseworker reported that Katerina was "tremendously meshed with her mother; father appears to play a more passive role." But Jackson's affidavit offered perhaps the main reason that the investigation had centered on Nicola instead of on Eurico: "Most M.S.B.P. offenders are mothers of the victim." If Katerina was being harmed by unnecessary medical procedures, her mother was, by definition, the prime suspect.

When the caseworkers visited the de Sousas' town house, Katerina was in the bath and Nicola, who could hear her singing from downstairs, was cooking spaghetti sauce. The caseworkers asked Nicola detailed questions about Katerina's tangled medical history; Nicola dug out files to prove that certain procedures had been necessary. They wanted to talk to Katerina alone, so Nicola got her out of the bath and waited upstairs. "I did not want to leave her alone with them," she recalled. "They said I had to—I had no choice. I was terrified they'd take her out the front door without my having a chance to apprehend them."

Nicola had been homeschooling her daughter in the afternoons; she had found that when Katerina sat upright for hours it often caused pain in her defective spine. The two caseworkers asked Katerina to show them how she and her schoolmate Victoria liked to play kitties by crawling on the floor; they told her that if she could do that she didn't need to come home from school early. The caseworkers also asked about the family's sleeping arrangements—Nicola often slept in Katerina's room because Eurico has an "earth-shattering snore," and because Katerina sometimes needed her during the night. "My heart was pounding to the point I could hear it resonating in my ears," Nicola recalled. "All I could think about was how I could stop them from taking her away."

Several months later, Ned Jackson wrote up his affidavit—a bill of particulars urging a family-court judge to place Katerina under a "six month supervision order." After meeting Nicola twice, he had arrived at a scathing assessment of her. He concluded that although Katerina did have congenital problems, she "may have been subjected to invasive and unnecessary surgical procedures and medical tests, as a result of what appears to be Mrs. de Sousa's insatiable need for attention from medical practitioners, family members, the community." The battle for Katerina had begun—a battle that was, in large part, about how much mothering was too much, and about the suspicions that an assertive and anxious parent can arouse.

How it is that Nicola de Sousa came to be lumped together with the terrifying mothers whom Roy Meadow wrote about, and whom David Southall videotaped, is both complicated and disturbing. Over the years, psychologists have steadily loosened the narrow definition of an arcane syndrome—a phenomenon known as "definitional creep." In an effort to prevent Munchausen abuse by drawing up a standard portrait of the perpetrator, they fashioned a profile that was broad enough to cast suspicion on many mothers whose children were genuinely ill. Not coincidentally, the M.S.B.P. diagnosis flowered at a moment when fretful overparenting was becoming common in the West; psychologists began to worry that some expressions of anxiously attentive mothering might be unhealthy—or even pathological.

M.S.B.P.'s trajectory from scattered case studies to mainstream diagnosis is in some ways typical for a newly recognized disorder. Like attention deficit disorder, shyness disorder, and bipolarity, the syndrome has often been presented by rhetorical fiat as something that is surely underreported, and about which a silence prevails—even as it becomes increasingly well known. Unlike most other syndromes, however, M.S.B.P. has been canonized without being subjected to controlled, empirical studies. Eric Mart, a forensic psychologist in Manchester, New Hampshire, writes that the literature is almost exclusively "based on the experiences of physicians and psychologists in diagnosing or treating the disorder," and lacks "well-defined criteria for determining what is and what is not a case of M.S.B.P."

None of this is to say that M.S.B.P. is a figment of the medical profession's imagination. In England, where three mothers accused or convicted of infanticide on the basis of testimony by Roy Meadow have had their cases overturned in the past five years, there has been an outsized backlash against the diagnosis. Articles in the British press railed against Meadow's rule of thumb that a second crib death in a family was suspicious, and a third was murder, unless proven otherwise. (In the overturned convictions, the British appeals court suggested that genetic factors might explain the incidence of multiple infant deaths in some families.) The British government has ordered reviews of hundreds of cases in which parents were accused of killing their children. Many of these cases involve accusations of M.S.B.P., and if even one of them is found to have been false it will be troubling. But recent press accounts in Britain casually refer to M.S.B.P. as a "discredited" diagnosis—as though the issue weren't whether people had been falsely accused but whether the syndrome itself was real. Those who need reminding that it is might look to the case of Maxine Robinson, one of the first cases to be reviewed. At a hearing in April, Robinson confessed that she had killed three of her children.

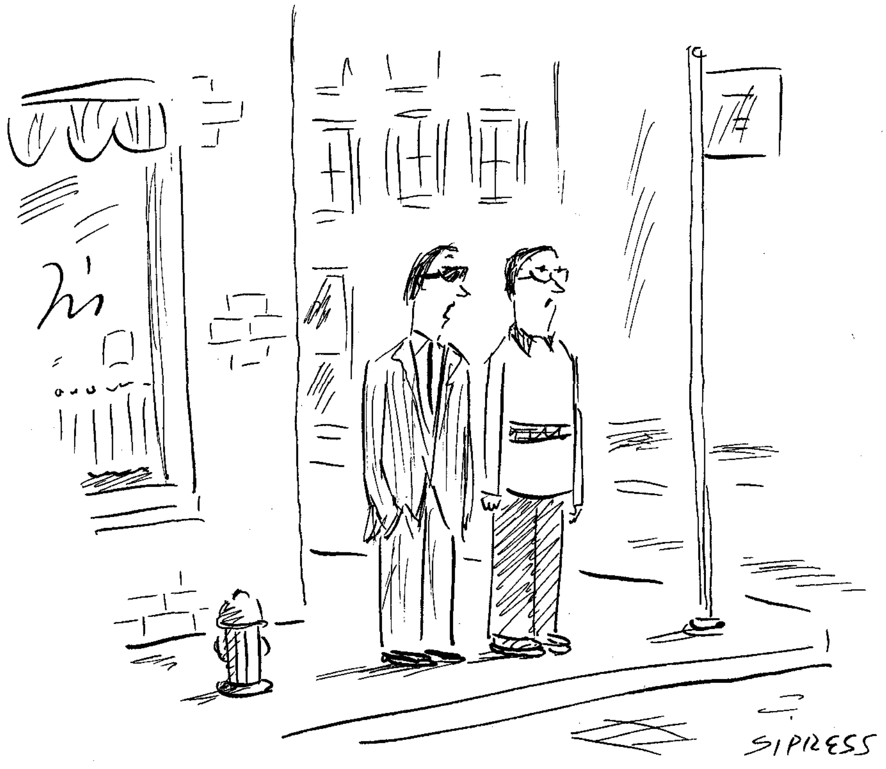
The larger question, then, is whether M.S.B.P. is best thought of as a disorder or simply as a criminal act. People who rob banks aren't usually called victims of "bank robber's syndrome," after all, and parents who beat their children are simply called child abusers. And nobody assumes that these wrongdoers are all driven by the same set of motives—let alone by a discrete mental illness.

One of the primary aims of psychologists and pediatricians who first defined M.S.B.P. was to ascertain a motive for such perverse behavior. In a 1994 article for the *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, Roy Meadow abandoned his initial circumspection in favor of something like the deep-dyed specificity of the short story: "The perpetrating mother is commonly an alert, intelligent, and socially more aware person than her rather feeble, unenterprising husband. Alternatively, she is a worried, inadequate woman with a dependent personality, and has a particularly 'macho' partner who spends the evening in front of the television, reading *Gun Weekly*, whilst his wife cooks offal for his Alsatian dog." Meadow noted, "Sharing an ill child with your partner may be better than sharing nothing." A woman who tends to a child with a "rare" illness attracts sympathy and attention and admiration from friends and relatives, feels a sense of purpose, and gains temporary residence in the hospital ward—a comforting world where the clamorous demands of other children are held at bay with the best of excuses. "A pediatric unit is a disguised mental health facility . . . and rather more acceptable than one with an alternative title," Meadow wrote.

The same year, two Americans—Herbert Schreier, a psychiatrist at the Children's Hospital and Research Center at Oakland, and Judith Libow, a psychologist there—published a book, "Hurting for Love," that has become perhaps the most influential meditation on the Munchausen mother. Schreier and Libow described the syndrome as something that has broad and familiar social determinants. For some women, Schreier and Libow argued, concocting fake afflictions for their children was a way to break out of the "tragically limited" role of "devoted caretaker": "The unusual and damaging role that some women eventually embrace for themselves by means of medical fabrication offers them an opportunity to obtain 'power' over physicians and gain entry into an exciting social world without threat to their 'perfect mother' status." In this view, the child was a fetish offered up by Munchausen mothers so that they might keep alive a relationship with an idealized authority figure, or, as Schreier and Libow put it, "to entice and simultaneously control their powerful, professional victims." M.S.B.P. was framed in psychiatric terms, as a "female perversion" in which the perpetrator "feels a sense of elation when brazenly defying the moral order." In fact, the authors suggest, the disorder "may be a gender-related form of psychopathy."

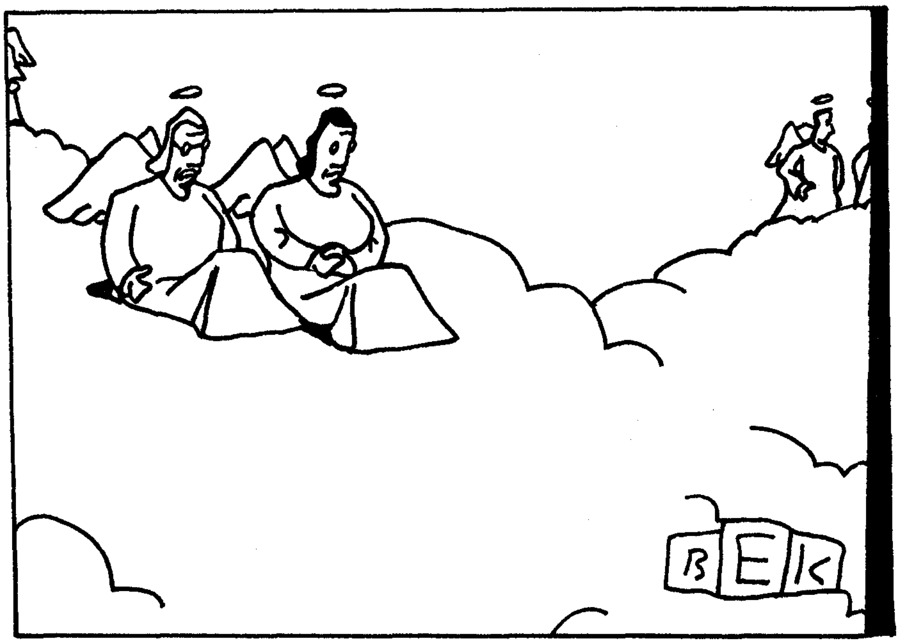
The book was published to acclaim; the social dynamics it described, however, were from an earlier era. Schreier and Libow depicted a world in which "isolated women in rapidly expanding suburbs" were in thrall to fantasies of all-powerful male doctors—fantasies fed by soap operas and sixties shows like "Dr. Kildare." But by the nineties women had entered medicine in record numbers; TV depictions of doctors had become cynical; patients had become stroppy, self-taught medical consumers; and the realities of managed care made Schreier and Libow's depiction of a pediatrician lavishing special attention on a mother and her child seem quaint. Furthermore, the quasi-feminist context in which the authors placed M.S.B.P.—frustrated, smart women looking to exercise their thwarted ambition in socially acceptable ways—was both dated and facile.

By the mid-nineties, clinicians in the United States, Britain, and Canada had begun to disseminate a psychological profile, a set of suspect traits, of the Munchausen mother. According to various journal articles on the subject, a perpetrator was "masterful in the world of deceit, because she gains the support of the nursing and medical staff, who view her as a dedicated, committed, loving, and caring mother." She might call doctors and nurses by their first names, or bring them cookies. She was familiar with medical terminology, and knew complex details of her child's case. She might "solicit and encourage diagnostic procedures," and be calm in the face of them. She might have worked in the medical field at one time, or wanted to. Typically, she was married, and her husband was inclined to leave medical decisions to her. When she was asked about her child's illness, she appeared to be "tearfully frustrated with the chronic nature of the condition." She was reluctant to leave the sick child's side; her constant hovering made her, in the words of one expert, a "helicopter mother." She was likely to be "overinvolved" and "over-



"You knew I was straight when you married me."

protective" of the child, and would "tend to him as if he were younger." The Munchausen mother was prone to bond with other parents of sick children on the ward. She was, in sum, "obsessed with the child's illness."



"It's very nice. I just think they could add a spa."

Profiles can be useful, but they are rarely predictive. (Most anti-American terrorists may be young Arab men, but few young Arab men are terrorists.) And in this case the profile was especially unhelpful. The relatively few clinical assessments that had been made of Munchausen mothers indicated that the perpetrators were not nearly as similar as the profile suggested. Some showed a high incidence of depression or a likelihood of having been abused as children; some did not. A few studies reported that the mothers had a history of psychosomatic illnesses; others equivocated. Some showed a high preponderance of personality disorders, but this was clearly an insufficient explanation, since most mothers with personality disorders do not harm their children in this way.

One particularly dubious element of the standard M.S.B.P. profile, which was published in such periodicals as the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* and *Archives of Disease in Childhood,* was its assertion that perpetrators were "deniers" who would firmly deflect accusations of abuse. This placed accused mothers in an absurd bind. "The 'perpetrator' may genuinely be innocent and that is why she persistently and vehemently denies harming her child," C. J. Morley, who is now a professor of pediatrics at Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, wrote in 1995. "In some cases the mothers are told if they do not confess they are unlikely to have their children back. This is blackmail and may result in a false confession."

Many of the profile's other supposed warning signs—familiarity with a child's medical history; a protective relationship with a chronically sick child—are actually signs of good parenting, as studies have confirmed. In one survey of parents with sick children, subjects were asked to list helpful things that hospital staff could do for them; the most important was "being allowed to stay with my child as much as possible." A study comparing paternal and maternal styles of coping with a child's chronic illness noted that "mothers tend to use contact with the medical team treating the child as a coping behavior more frequently than fathers," and feel more personally responsible than fathers for a child's therapeutic needs. Furthermore, parental attitudes that might seem worrisome if a child is healthy—overprotectiveness, a tendency to treat the sick child as if he were younger than he is—can be functional if the child is chronically ill.

Indeed, habits characterized as "abnormal parental health-seeking behaviors" by Munchausen experts can appear unremarkable in this age of widespread parental anxiety. Middle-class parents tend to be exquisitely aware of health and safety issues, and often micromanage their children's lives in order to fend off a buzzing pack of threats. (Tainted vaccines! Stranger danger! Playground hazards!) David Anderegg, a psychologist at Bennington, argues, in "Worried All the Time" (2003), that this is in part because safety innovations like child-proof bottles and bicycle helmets can actually make us more uneasy by reminding us of the threats they were designed to avert. Moreover, the one-child family is increasingly becoming the norm in the West, and these families are characterized, in Anderegg's words, by "high parental investment"; first-time parents tend to worry the most.

Perhaps it was inevitable that some expressions of fretful child-rearing would eventually be cordoned off and declared a syndrome, if only to distinguish them from what the rest of us do all the time. Just as, in the nineteen-eighties, satanic ritual abuse represented the worst fears of what could happen in day care, so M.S.B.P. has come to represent the danger posed by mothers who are excessively involved with their children.

The notion that mothers can love and protect their children too much is not new. In Puritan New England, ministers warned mothers not to attach themselves too fondly or mourn their children too fiercely. A beloved child's death was not something to resist; it was something to accept, graciously, as God's will. Thus Increase Mather inveighed against a mother who had "doted" on her son and, when "the lovely youth fell ill of small pox," vowed not to let it take him. It was her "unruly passion," Mather chided, that kept her from taking the counsel of her ministers to accept whatever God decided for the boy—and she was duly punished for her excessive love when she died during the birth of her next child.

In "A Potent Spell: Mother Love and the Power of Fear" (2003), Janna Malamud Smith, a psychotherapist, chronicles the ways in which maternal anxiety, and even maternal doting, have been denounced for centuries—first because the unruly passion of mother love could render a woman insufficiently submissive to God (and to men of God), and later because it could lead her to defy the advice of male doctors. In the nineteen-twenties, the behaviorist John Watson railed against sentimental mothers who destroyed their children's character by coddling them—which, in his view, included hugging them. David Levy, a child psychiatrist in New York, coined the term "maternal overprotection" and published a book about this menace in 1943. It was a sickness "well portrayed," Levy wrote, "by a mother who holds her child tightly with one hand and makes the gesture of pushing away the rest of the world with the other." Some of Levy's colleagues preferred the term "octopus mother," with its intimations of slimy engulfment. Pop psychology of the fifties blamed "smother love" for breeding mama's boys, homosexuals, and Communists.

By contrast, the anxious dad is more a figure of fun than of menace—like Marlin, the fin-wringing clownfish papa in "Finding Nemo." And, in any case, fathers make far fewer appearances in psychiatric literature than do mothers. Smith writes, "It is remarkable that a professional discipline could assume so casually the right to assess stringently the unconscious minds" of women, "and use pseudoscientific yet exacting calipers to measure the way those mothers fail at love."

Nicola de Sousa gave birth to Katerina on July 19, 1993. The delivery was normal, but when Katerina was two days old Nicola and Eurico noticed a bruiselike mark on her arm. Nicola remembers thinking that it looked as if someone had accidentally smacked the baby's arm. But the mark got bigger, and the de Sousas soon noticed similar ones on their daughter's chest and scalp. Her belly seemed to be swollen, too.

In August, an ultrasound revealed that Katerina had large hemangiomas on her liver. Hemangiomas are benign tumors made up of clustered blood vessels, and in their most common manifestations—as discolored swellings on the skin—they are harmless. However, in rare cases hemangiomas can crop up in the brain, the airways, or the liver; these can cause heart failure, because the infant's heart must work especially hard to shunt blood through the densely bunched vessels.

Katerina was admitted to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. The de Sousas say that a pediatrician told them that she was likely to die; a letter from this doctor in Katerina's file states that "the baby has attacks of pallor for a few minutes, when she turns purple under the eyes. . . . The heart sounds were rapid. . . . I'm really concerned." The cardiologist who examined Katerina during her hospital stay, however, was optimistic, and reported, in another letter contained in her file, that "from the cardiac standpoint, I think the baby should do fine." He did not think it would be necessary to see her again.

The de Sousas were confused. Katerina was being treated with high-dose steroids, but the hemangiomas on her liver were still growing, and she seemed to be getting worse. She sweated when she nursed, which can be an indication of congestive heart failure, and her belly remained distended by an enlarged liver. They also felt that their worries were not being taken seriously by their doctors. Nicola was infuriated when a dermatologist she had consulted about Katerina told her that she was being a "neurotic mother."

Meanwhile, Nicola and Eurico began researching treatments for Katerina's condition. They learned about an experimental protocol in which interferon was used to slow the growth of tumors by switching off their blood supply. The study was taking place at Children's Hospital in Boston, and was conducted by Judah Folkman, the renowned cancer researcher. (This early work on hemangiomas in children was a crucial step in the development of angiogenesis inhibitors, which are promising new cancer drugs.) Nicola called Folkman's office, and his nurse told her that Katerina could receive immediate treatment. When Nicola reported back to Eurico, he said, "Let's do it." But she was apprehensive. Under Canada's health-care system, all citizens are insured, but the waiting lists for specialized procedures can be long. In Boston, the doctors were eager to act immediately. If the experimental therapy worked, this haste would be justified; if it didn't, Nicola would feel that they had taken a foolish risk.

Nicola had liked Folkman's nurse, so she called her back and asked whether she would enroll her own child in the study. The nurse said that she would. Within a week, the de Sousas were on their way to Boston; within another week they had brought Katerina home and were giving her interferon shots themselves. Six months later, the tumors had shrunk substantially; after fifteen months, they were gone.

When Katerina had initially been evaluated in Canada, none of the medical reports said that she was experiencing congestive heart failure—only that she "might be on the verge of cardiac decompensation." Ned Jackson, the caseworker, expresses alarm over this apparent discrepancy in his affidavit: "Mrs. de Sousa has maintained this version of events throughout Katerina's life, despite the fact that cardiac testing performed on Katerina when she was an infant produced normal results, and that her treating physicians concluded that there was no evidence of congestive heart failure." But when I spoke with Folkman this spring he said that when he saw Katerina she had indeed been in congestive heart failure. He added, "The interferon alpha saved Katerina's life."

The decision to seek experimental treatment was, as Folkman put it, a "triumph" for Katerina's parents. The de Sousas, for their part, began to think of the American medical system as more responsive than the Canadian system. Some of the de Sousas' Canadian doctors, however, thought they were seeking care in the States unnecessarily and habitually—almost addictively.

Suspicion began to build, against Nicola in particular. Even some of the doctors who supported the de Sousas' medical decisions felt that Nicola was unusually persistent, and that the trauma of having a child who was gravely ill as an infant had made a nervous temperament more so. On one occasion, when Nicola took Katerina in for a checkup, the chart noted that "mom is very anxious, tired, and not getting enough sleep." The account of another visit is more overtly disapproving: "Child is in hospital, monitor is going off, but then correcting itself immediately, mom becoming increasingly upset with disturbances, mom became angry when alarm rang and insisted on taking baby home, mom signed refusal of treatment form and left hospital—she stayed overnight at crib despite doctor saying that child was fine.”

In 1999, the psychiatrists Marc D. Feldman and Deirdre C. Rand published a report in the *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* describing several cases in which the M.S.B.P. profile had led to false allegations. In one, the mother of an eighteen-month-old boy had brought him to the doctor for recurrent infections. She was labelled an M.S.B.P. perpetrator partly because her child’s illness was recalcitrant, but also because of the way hospital staff judged her demeanor. She was seen as “unusually attached” to her infant, and her insistence on being present when tests were performed was interpreted as “eagerness to see pain inflicted.” Her use of medical jargon conveyed an “unhealthy interest” in her son’s condition. The boy was placed under surveillance, and the mother was allowed to visit only under supervision. (The staff noted that the “mother is very resentful.”) Nonetheless, the child got worse, and he ultimately received a diagnosis of Kostmann’s syndrome, an immune-deficiency disorder. Feldman and Rand note, “The physician who entered the provisional M.S.B.P. diagnosis declined the mother’s request to refute it explicitly” on the updated medical chart, saying that “she was still ‘a possible M.S.B.P. perpetrator’ who might engage in M.S.B.P. abuse in the future.”

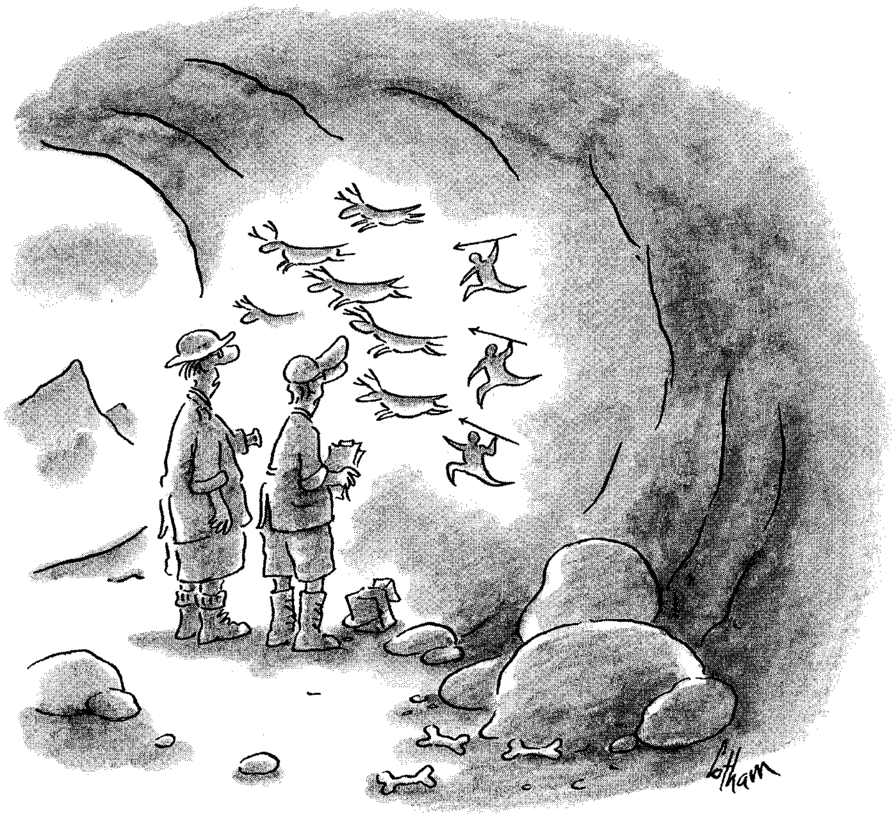
In systematic studies of the M.S.B.P. profile, its predictive value has not held up well. A 2000 study conducted at a children’s hospital in Atlanta, employing covert video and audio surveillance, concluded that the profile had not helped identify which mothers would turn out to be guilty: “While many of the families fit the usual stereotypes of M.S.B.P. . . . we were unable to predict the certainty of diagnosis using these factors.” Fewer than half of the twenty-three mothers whom video surveillance proved to be abusers had read medical journals or had seemed, according to the staff, to be particularly close to doctors or nurses.

Leading authorities on M.S.B.P. have begun to acknowledge that the profile is flawed. “Some non-experts have been sloppy in their thinking,” Randell Alexander, the director of the Division of Child Protection and Forensic Pediatrics at the University of Florida College of Medicine, in Jacksonville, said. “They’ve jumped at some aspect of a person’s behavior or personality and said that shows she did it.” Donna Rosenberg, of the University of Colorado, told me that researchers’ focus on intention was misguided. “I haven’t the foggiest idea how one penetrates motivation,” she said. “There’s a reason our skulls are soundproof.” Marc Feldman, who argues that it’s not useful to think of M.S.B.P. as a psychiatric disorder, also opposes profiles. “I don’t think there are any personal characteristics that define a potential perpetrator,” he said.

Despite such critiques, the profile has continued to gain mainstream acceptance. The checklist has been published in the *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin*, in various newspaper articles, and in a number of publications for nurses—in which the suspect traits are listed, often without disclaimers. The profile also continues to carry weight in the judicial system; in cases in which there is very little evidence of a mother’s having harmed a child, it can keep the accusation alive. Eric Mart, the forensic psychologist, told me that in courtrooms, where he often testifies as an expert witness for the defense, “they’re treating these things as probative when they’re not.” He went on, “What’s the average amount of time someone spends at a child’s bedside? That’s used as an exemplar. The courts think a lot of visits to the doctor, the mother used to work in a pharmacy, the child had asthma as a kid but it was never really clear what was going on—we’ve got a case of Munchausen.”

A few months ago, I met a woman on whose behalf Mart recently testified as an expert witness. Heather, who asked that I use only her first name, is thirty-six and lives in New Jersey, in a pretty condominium where the baby’s room has a basket of board books on the floor and antique prints of mice on the walls. She is an operating-room nurse who put herself through nursing school by working as a bartender at night. It’s easy to imagine her in both roles: she is warm, brassy, and efficient.

In April, 2003, she gave birth to a boy, just as she and her husband, an electrician, were on the verge of breaking up. Soon after his birth, Heather’s baby was given a diagnosis of acid reflux, and twice, when she thought he was choking, she called 911. According to a pediatrician who attended to the child, Heather’s husband thought she was making a fuss over



“As an animal lover, I find these images disturbing.”

nothing, and on the second visit to the emergency room he told the attending doctor, "I think she may be hurting the baby." A physician is required by law to report credible suspicions of abuse, and the doctor called child-protective services.

The two incidents involving reflux, and a visit Heather made to a urologist to consult about adhesions she had noticed on the baby's foreskin, were the only medical inquiries she had made that were not routine. Nonetheless, Heather fit the profile: she was a nurse; she had a good store of medical knowledge, which she was not shy about sharing; she was a worrier; and she was crazy about her baby.

As a result of the investigation, the child was placed with Heather's in-laws, with whom she did not get along. She was allowed to see her baby for two supervised visits each week. During these visits, Heather was not allowed to give any food or liquid to the baby—if she really was a Munchausen mom, she might try to poison him.

The state's investigation dragged on for six months, as a family-court judge held hearings on the dispute. The gastroenterologist who treated the baby did not think Heather suffered from M.S.B.P. He thought that she might have overreacted, but that such overreactions were common among new parents. (Heather herself acknowledged as much—the divorce had been stressful.) The urologist, too, agreed that Heather's inquiry was appropriate, and confirmed that the baby had redundant foreskin. In January, the judge dismissed the allegation against Heather, and her son was returned to her. Heather's stepfather, Tom, who, along with her mother, had accompanied her to court and helped pay for her defense, sent an e-mail to family and friends: "Lawyer's fees—$25,000 plus. Dr. Mart—$7,000. Dr. Annie—$5,000. Sitting on the couch with a smiling, laughing baby boy—priceless."

When I visited Heather on a wet, gray afternoon recently, she was padding around in a cardigan and socks. She served Tom and me a lunch of homemade lasagna and cooed at her son, who sat in his high chair, pink-cheeked and wriggly. "Hi, handsome!" she said brightly, kissing him on his head and offering him a teething biscuit.

She said that she felt lucky to have her baby back, yet she was furious to have "lost six months of his life." The false accusation, she said, made her feel "like I was being swept out into a riptide. In the beginning, I just kept thinking, These are professionals; they'll figure it out. I'll have him back in a few days. And then it went on and on."

More recently, some experts have begun stretching the M.S.B.P. diagnosis even further. They are applying it to mothers who spend too much time visiting schools, not hospitals—to moms who "overadvocate" for special-education services, or aggressively seek diagnoses of cognitive or psychological difficulties, such as attention deficit disorder or dyslexia, for their children.

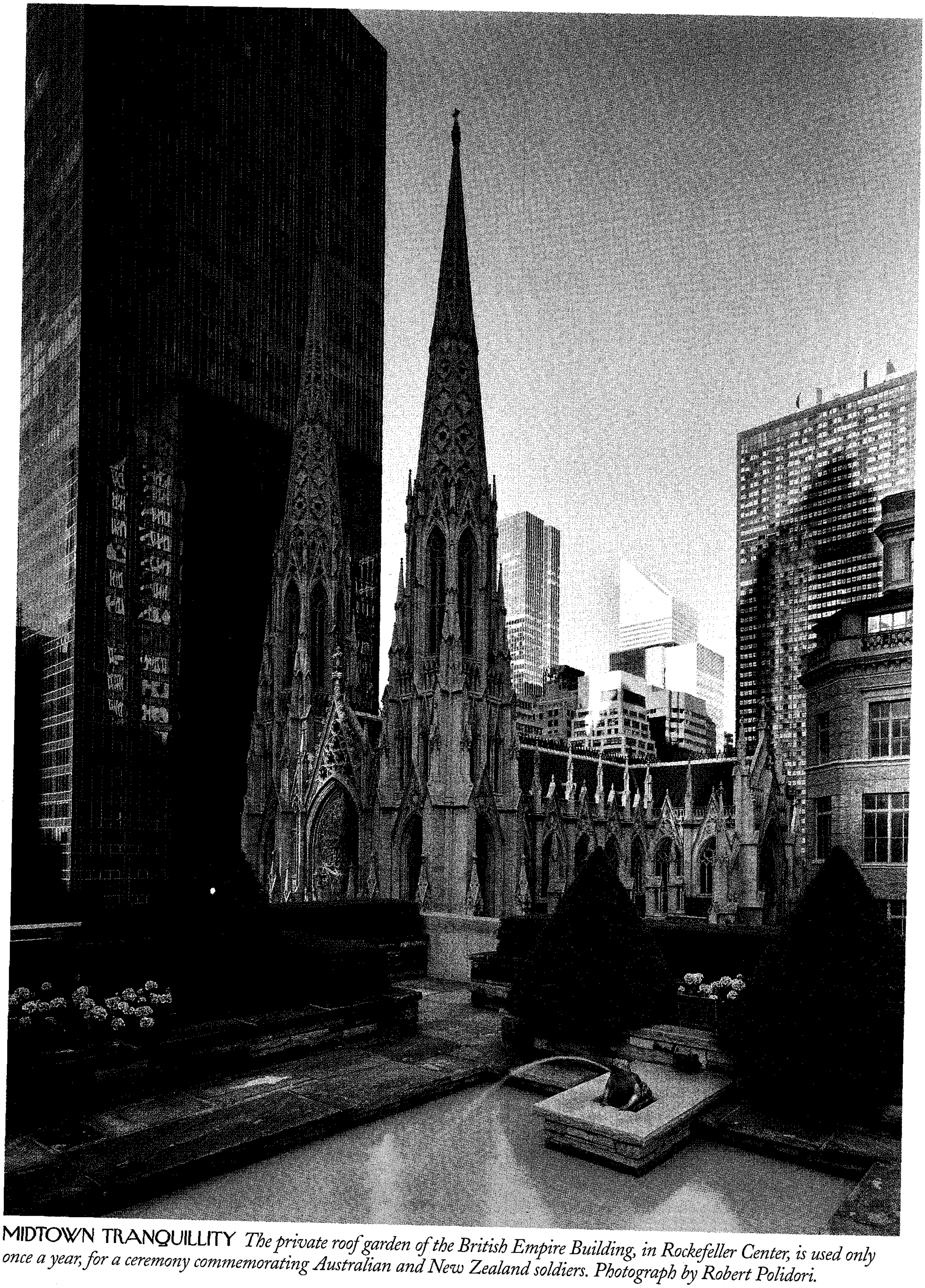
Herbert Schreier, the influential co-author of "Hurting for Love," has written that school psychologists and behaviorists have become the "new targets" for manipulative mothers. He describes them, chillingly, in a 2000 article in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, as powerful figures with "the uncanny abilities of the psychopath or imposter to simulate someone above suspicion." To complicate matters, some of these bad mothers are themselves psychologists or learning specialists, Schreier maintains, and thus have "broad and detailed knowledge of the mental-health field" with which to dupe school officials.

Schreier has argued that "we need to change the definition" of M.S.B.P. "by expanding the target audience of the mother" still further "to include police investigators, child-protection workers, lawyers, and school personnel"—anyone, it seems, in authority. The philosophers David B. Allison and Mark S. Roberts note, in their book "Disordered Mother or Disordered Diagnosis?," that the definition of a Munchausen mom has devolved into "a manipulative person who seeks attention from somebody who can be construed to hold power of some kind: that is, probably, anybody."

Randell Alexander, the M.S.B.P. scholar at the University of Florida, told me, "I think most of us would prefer to be more conservative. We'd probably like to save the M.S.B.P. label for something where the child is going to be poked with a needle by a doctor." But it's probably too late for such circumspection. A 2002 special issue of the journal *Child Maltreatment* carries an article entitled "Munchausen by Proxy: Presentations in Special Education." It ends by listing some "common presentations" of mothers who have this problem—a new profile that's strikingly like the old one, but with "educational" substituted for "medical." Thus diagnosticians are warned to be on the lookout for "a parent (usually the mother) who appears to be educationally knowledgeable and/or fascinated with details of educational or learning disabilities, appears to enjoy the school environment, and often expresses interest in the details of other children with educational problems."

Family courts considering M.S.B.P. cases are likely to hear estimates of mortality rates presented by the prosecution. These will probably be based on cases of medical abuse in hospital settings. Yet the new cases are often presented as though they shared a similarly dismal prognosis. The *Child Maltreatment* article quotes death rates of between nine and twenty-two per cent in Munchausen families. Even for hospital-abuse cases, twenty-two per cent is probably too high; Marc Feldman and others say nine per cent is more realistic. And, in any case, it seems a stretch to suggest that a mother who tries to get a child a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder (even if she's doing a normal child a disservice) is as dangerous to her children as a mother who systematically smothers her baby. Yet some M.S.B.P. experts argue that the one behavior lies on a continuum with the other. In a variation on the old slippery-slope argument, angling for a learning-disorder label (and perhaps a better class placement) is seen as the equivalent of smoking marijuana, and smothering a child is tantamount to smoking heroin: one, it is feared, could lead to the other. A judge who worries that a child could end up dead may well err on the side of caution, and place him in foster care—a drastic step that can cause children to suffer tremendously.

Eric Mart recently testified in a case involving an M.S.B.P. accusation from school officials. The mother, who lives in Massachusetts and has a son and a daughter, "came to school and said her kids had terrible learning disabilities and kept demanding more evaluations and out-of-district placements. When officials took a good look, they were concerned whether there was anything



MIDTOWN TRANQUILLITY *The private roof garden of the British Empire Building, in Rockefeller Center, is used only once a year, for a ceremony commemorating Australian and New Zealand soldiers. Photograph by Robert Polidori.*

"The mortgage payments on our new hideout should be somewhat alleviated by our upcoming schedule of bank robberies."

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wrong with these kids, and it actually went to court." More than three years later, the case remains unresolved; the son, who turned eighteen, is now free to see his mother, but the daughter, who is in her mid-teens, remains in foster care.

When Richard Asher, a British physician, first identified the original Munchausen syndrome, it was 1951, and Britain's National Health Service was only a few years old. Asher and the other doctors who first wrote about "peregrinating problem patients" characterized them with unusual vitriol, as Allison and Roberts observe in "Disordered Mother or Disordered Diagnosis?" One early article recommended that the *British Medical Journal* publish a "rogue's gallery" of known fakers. In a remarkable violation of patient privacy, some case studies did print the names of their subjects. Several recommended that the lying "hospital hobos" be confined in mental asylums for life.

What accounted for the animosity toward these patients? In part, Munchausen sufferers rankled doctors because they presented so many opportunities for well-meaning professionals to make mistakes. As one writer who responded to Asher's original case study observed, "All the rumpus and cost to the Health Service were caused by the many doctors who ordered expensive investigations and treatment, not by the patient, who merely, and quite lawfully, presented to his medical advisers with a tall story."

It is also telling, however, that the Munchausen diagnosis emerged first in England, at the same time as the National Health Service. As Allison and Roberts note, millions of Britons "suffering from the massive dislocation, stress, abandonment, and grief created by the war" had a need for "comfort, housing, food, and shelter." Many of these people turned to the new National Health Service scheme, "which offered free medical treatment within the reassuring confines of hospital care." At the same time, "the creation of the national health care system was itself an 'incentive' for physicians and hospital staffs to take a dim view of patients in general, for fear that their private practices would be eliminated and they would be overwhelmed by additional thousands of 'dole' patients."

In this way, the social and economic circumstances of medicine helped bring needy patients into contact with frustrated doctors; one product of this interaction was the portrait of the despised Munchausen patient. Similarly, it is no accident that the rise of the Munchausen by proxy diagnosis has run parallel with the rise of aggressive behavior in medical patients. During the past decade, people have routinely shown up at doctors' offices armed with Internet printouts, or displayed a suspicion of "mainstream medicine" fed by alternative practitioners and by dissatisfaction with managed care. These patients, caught up in their conceptions of themselves as "empowered advocates," can come into conflict with doctors and caseworkers.

In the H.M.O. era, many parents see themselves as needing to fight for their children's rights in an overtaxed health-care system. Yet doctors and nurses are frequently exasperated by what they consider to be pushy behavior. A 2001 study of children's pain management in hospitals concluded that nurses often resent parental involvement because they think it increases their workload: if parents were "passive," then the nurses "were not being approached and having demands made on their time."

False allegations of M.S.B.P. can arise from the misreading of insistent patient behavior as malicious behavior. Eric Mart told me, "My wife has coined a term: obnoxious mother syndrome. I think that's part of what's going on here." Penny Knapp, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California at Davis, who has studied cases of M.S.B.P., recalls "receiving a number of referrals from a physician who is a rather colorful character, strong-willed and sharp-tongued. He used to get into struggles with some parents, and then he'd call me up and say, 'O.K., I've got a Munchausen up here.' I'd go and do an evaluation, and what I'd find is a troubled parent who wasn't communicating well and wasn't complying with treatment and maybe wasn't coping—but not somebody who was deliberately harming her child."

According to some experts, M.S.B.P. diagnosis is applied most frequently to working-class moms. Perhaps this is because their demands are not as easily met by doctors. "If I have a million dollars and I want to take my kid for three or four psychoeducational evaluations, they'll take my money till the cows come home," Mart explained. "It's when somebody is getting Medicaid, or getting some services and starts asking for more help, that very often you'll find that somebody—a caseworker, a nurse—gets into a little argument with them, and then we're off to the races."

In 1997, the child-protective services of Los Angeles County placed Debra Reid's nine-year-old son in foster care. Jonathan had asthma, but social workers reported that Reid appeared to be exaggerating his symptoms, had missed doctors' appointments, and had taken him to the emergency room too often—all of which, they said, suggested M.S.B.P. Reid was a single mother of four who lived in Gardena, a racially diverse town where she was a community activist. According to the Los Angeles *Times*, social workers described Reid as a "loudmouth," and she came across as hostile or pigheaded to many professionals she met while trying to retain custody of her son—though this anger was directed only at them, not at her children. According to an article by Michael Gougis in *New Times Los Angeles*, Reid told one caseworker that "he had no life and needed to get one."

A juvenile-court commissioner who considered Reid's family situation did not fault her for calling 911 too often, noting that, "faced with a child either having great difficulty breathing or not breathing at all, a reasonably prudent person would call 911." But the judge added, "Although Ms. Reid is knowledgeable and concerned for her children's medical needs, she does what she thinks is right and to a significant extent disregards what others think is the correct course of treatment based on their professional opinions. The totality of the evidence supports a pattern of non-cooperation, unrealistic positions, and behaviors by Ms. Reid."

When it came to the severity of Jonathan's asthma, and her own ability to keep him alive, Debra Reid was, apparently, quite realistic. Six weeks after the county removed him from his mother's care, Jonathan died of an asthma attack in the middle of the night, at a hospital to which his foster parents had taken him. His foster mother said that she hadn't been told how bad his asthma was. In 2002, the county approved a million-dollar settlement for Reid. One of the supervisors, Gloria Molina, cried as she apologized to Reid on behalf of the county. "They said my child was healthy," Reid told the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. "Well, that child now lies in an Inglewood Cemetery."

When Katerina de Sousa was four years old, Nicola took her to Children's Hospital in Boston for an annual checkup of her liver, and while she was there she mentioned Katerina's difficulties with bladder and bowel control, and some conflicting diagnoses that she had received from Canadian doctors. A neurologist at the hospital ordered an MRI, and discovered that Katerina had a tethered cord: her spinal cord was fastened to a benign fatty tumor and could not move freely. A tethered cord can cause various problems, including spinal curvature, back and leg pain, and incontinence. As a child grows, the cord becomes stretched beyond capacity, damaging surrounding nerves and blood vessels. The de Sousas couldn't afford elective surgery in Boston, so they returned to Canada; two months later, a neurosurgeon in Toronto performed an operation to untether the cord.

Katerina was beginning to thrive—she attended a nursery school, at which Nicola was a frequent volunteer, and she took swimming lessons and gymnastics. She was on her way to becoming the pre-Raphaelite beauty that she is today, with milk-white skin, a luminous smile, and a scattering of pale freckles. But she also had several symptoms that, as she grew older, became more pronounced. She experienced continued incontinence, and pain and weakness in her legs, which the tethered-cord surgery does not always correct. (Indeed, scarring can make the pain worse.) Other symptoms were more baffling: her left eye sometimes rolled upward independently; she had headaches; sometimes she seemed to have double vision, and complained that she saw two Mommies. At other times, she insisted that she had "bees in her ears"—probably tinnitus—and she couldn't stand loud noises. She sometimes had choking spells when she ate. Nicola's father, Ian Templeton, a retired physicist, recalls that he and his wife, Elsa, were often nervous when Nicola dropped Katerina off for lunch at their house: "It was scary. She'd just be eating and then—for a moment she wouldn't be breathing." With the exception of the eye-rolling, doctors did not witness these symptoms, which were described by the de Sousas as unpredictable and intermittent.

During a visit to a physical-therapy

"He inherited the throne, but that's all."

specialist in Toronto, a nurse asked Nicola if she had ever considered whether Katerina might have Chiari syndrome, a developmental anomaly in which the lower portions of the brain are compressed. Her symptoms were consistent with the disease, the nurse said. At the de Sousas' behest, a neurosurgeon in Canada examined Katerina but concluded that she did not have the classic Chiari malformation, in which the tonsils of the lower brain project downward. But, in the meantime, Eurico had read about a neurosurgeon in Brooklyn, Thomas Milhorat, who was adept at reading MRI scans for subtler signs of skull crowding. Milhorat, who now heads the Chiari Institute in Great Neck, New York, examined brain scans of Katerina and concluded that there was clinical and MRI evidence of Chiari syndrome. The de Sousas sought a second opinion from David Frim, the chief of pediatric neurosurgery at the University of Chicago. He, too, saw evidence of brain crowding, and believed that Katerina's clinical symptoms pointed to Chiari syndrome. He also offered to perform the surgery for free.

Frim recently told me that treating Katerina's condition as Chiari syndrome "was kind of a presumption," because the brain scans weren't "a hundred per cent classic." On the other hand, "she had all these symptoms," he said. "Her imaging wasn't convincing, but her clinical picture was." Five per cent of patients with tethered cords have Chiari syndrome, Frim reasoned, and "in patients where there are progressive life-threatening symptoms"—by which he meant Katerina's choking spells—"there is a place for this operation." Still, as he explained to the de Sousas at the time, the operation "was a little bit of a leap of faith."

In Canada, the doctor whom the de Sousas informed of their decision, E. C. G. Ventureyra, the chief of neurosurgery at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, was extremely dubious. In December, 1998, he wrote a scathing letter to them outlining his objections. "I have read with interest both Dr. Milhorat and Frim's correspondence," the letter said. "Based on my findings I must disagree with their recommendation for posterior-fossa decompression in Katerina's case. . . . I strongly feel that advocating posterior-fossa decompression in this particular case is equivalent to advocating acupuncture, herbal medicine, or electromagnetic-wave therapy. . . . In my view, when a surgical indication does not exist, surgery should not be used."

It's not clear who first used the phrase "Munchausen syndrome by proxy" to describe Nicola de Sousa's care of her daughter. Susan Bennett, the chief of child protection at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, would not comment. A spokesman for the Children's Aid Society said that the agency could not comment on specific cases. But it is clear that the Canadian doctors who knew about the Chiari diagnosis didn't approve, and were alarmed by the de Sousas' pursuit of surgery.

Frim found the de Sousas' approach neither unusual nor disquieting. "This is how medicine is now," he said. "We have patients who come in with hundreds of pages they've printed off the Internet, and they've seen six other neurologists. The de Sousas were looking for the best possible care, and they were demanding, but that doesn't mean they were wacko." In January, 1999, Frim performed cranial surgery on Katerina. He found that Katerina had abnormal tonsils that were impeding the flow of fluid between the brain and the spinal cord, much the way a classic Chiari malformation would. According to the de Sousas, within a few weeks after the operation all the symptoms associated with Chiari syndrome—the eye-rolling, the choking, the headaches—vanished.

Katerina continued, however, to experience pain and weakness in her legs, as well as incontinence; her charts show a number of consultations with pain clinics. In the spring of 2001, the de Sousas decided to see Frim again. He suggested that the cord might have become retethered—a fairly common occurrence—and that a second operation might be advisable. Once more, he offered to waive his fee, and, once more, the choice was not an obvious one. Bowel and bladder problems can be made worse by surgery, and back and leg pain isn't always resolved, either. The de Sousas opted for the surgery. They believe that it did give Katerina some pain relief and greater mobility, though it was not a cure.

One of the issues in the

EZ DUZIT
WESTPORT, CT.

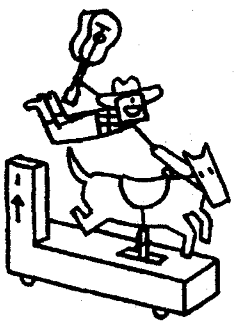
"What is it, Ira, that draws man inexorably back to the sea?"

M.S.B.P. investigation was that Nicola had made far too much of Katerina's leg pain—that she coddled her daughter, sometimes carrying her to the car after school. Ned Jackson, the caseworker, notes in his affidavit that he "personally observed Mrs. de Sousa carry Katerina out of the school on one occasion." One of the caseworkers who first interviewed Katerina noted skeptically that she "confirmed that she has pain in her leg, and pointed to a certain spot, but no further detail."

The case file, which the de Sousas shared with me, also contains a passionate letter from Peter Morrice, a pediatrician who saw Katerina. He wrote, "The impression my nurse and I have of Mrs. de Sousa is that she appears driven and highly anxious. We have wondered about an element of depression with her and have noted the very strong bond between herself and Katerina—understandable from Katerina's life-threatening early months of life. Although physical causes have undoubtedly played a role in Katerina's symptoms, one has to query psychological 'stress factors' as super-added factors." He speculated that Nicola's anxiety might be "related to the number of investigations and treatment at different centres. . . . It was my wish that the parents reduce drastically . . . the number of investigations that Katerina has to undergo. . . . It is quite possible that at least some of her chronic constipation and urinary symptoms have a psychological origin. On the surface she appears to be a healthy girl though at times sad and withdrawn. Would her symptoms (those that still exist) diminish if she could be given a rest from investigation and allowed a more normal and happy childhood?"

Ned Jackson makes a darker speculation in the affidavit. Nicola, he reports, "stated that Katerina wears a diaper as her legs go numb when she sits on the toilet." Though he admits to a "lack of medical knowledge," he nonetheless wonders if "Katerina's incontinence is a result of her never being properly toilet trained." How can Jackson imagine Nicola engaging in such a cruel trick? In his opinion, she had subjected Katerina to "extensive and invasive tests throughout her short life," nearly all of which "produced normal results." Jackson suggests that, in the end, Nicola's imagination had caused her to harm Katerina: "The vast majority of Katerina's reported symptoms do not appear to have been witnessed by health practitioners or individuals other than Mrs. de Sousa."

By the time the caseworkers showed up at the de Sousa home, however, Nicola said that she had begun to think of Katerina as "pretty healthy." She felt that Katerina did better when she came home in the afternoon and could take a bath if necessary, and lie down or try other comfortable positions while doing her schoolwork. Diane Beckett, an environmental consultant whose son attended Katerina's school, remembers thinking that Nicola's decision to volunteer at the school by working in the library or helping with the reading program allowed her "to be available to Katerina in a supportive role if she needed her without being a hovering mom, as so many would be in that situation."



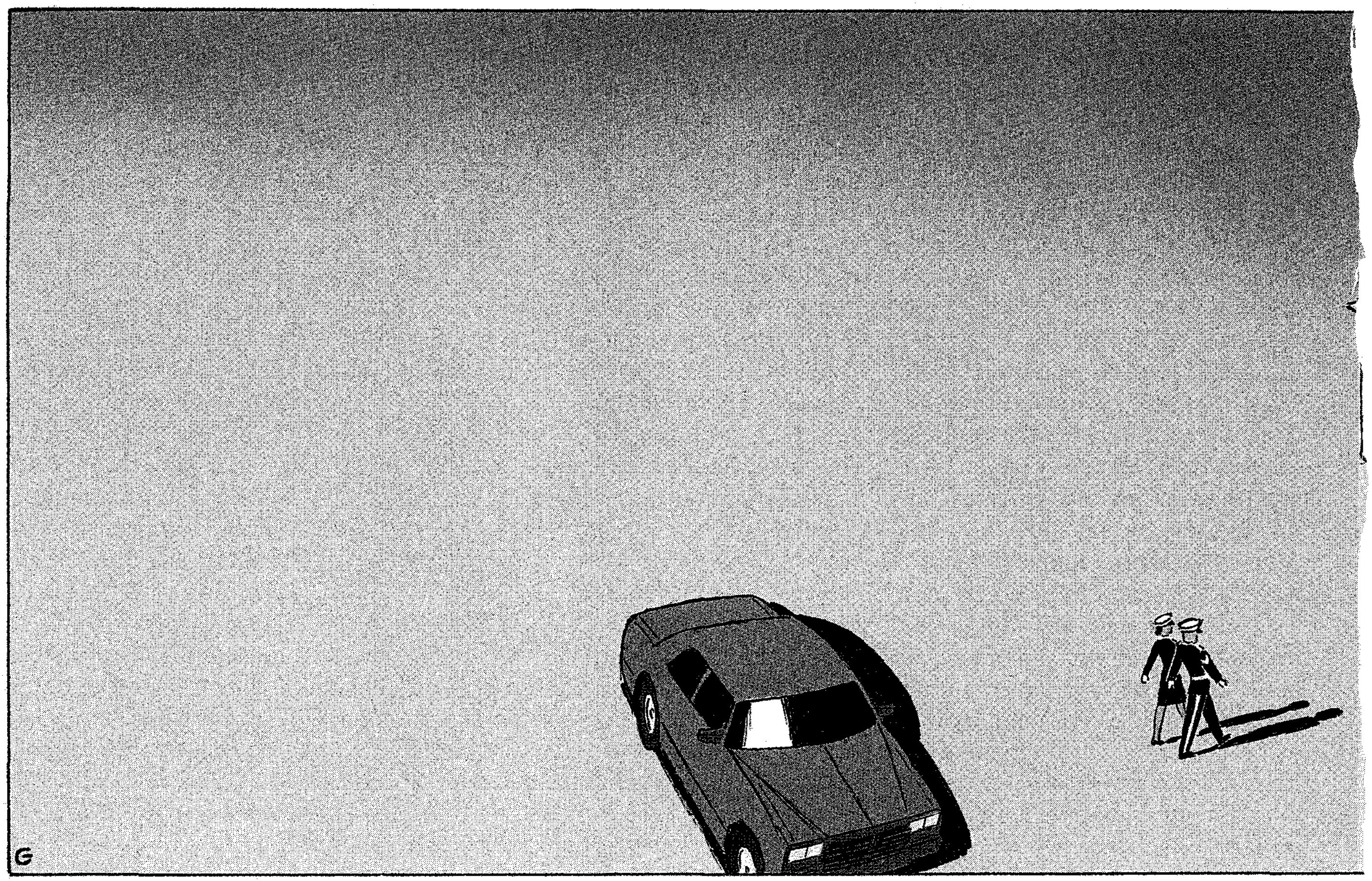
The M.S.B.P. investigation of the de Sousas lasted longer than a year. During that time, Katerina remained with her parents, pending a possible appearance in family court to decide whether she should be placed in foster care. The de Sousas began homeschooling her, partly because they thought they could manage Katerina's pain better at home, and partly because they believed that it conferred some academic advantages—but mainly because they worried that social workers might arrive at school and take their daughter away. In the meantime, Katerina did lots of things that propelled her into the world: she took weekly classes in drama, pottery, painting, drawing, and swimming, and she practiced woodworking at a local home-improvement store. (To Nicola's delight, Katerina turned out to be a whiz with power tools.) She played regularly with her old schoolmate Victoria. Still, keeping Katerina at home only reinforced the suspicions of Nicola's accusers. In his affidavit, Jackson calls the de Sousas' decision "surprising, and concerning." Homeschooling is a kind of sheltering, and the M.S.B.P. investigation was based, in part, on the idea that Nicola sheltered Katerina too much.

Eurico enlisted the support of the de Sousas' family physician, Nancy Clevette, who told caseworkers that she had never seen anything but a loving relationship between Nicola and Katerina. They got Nicola's psychiatrist, who had known her since 1987, to write a letter, and he, too, told caseworkers emphatically that he did not believe Nicola was a Munchausen mother. Several medical professionals whom the de Sousas had seen in the United States also wrote letters on Nicola's behalf. Judah Folkman wrote, "All of the doctors at the Children's Hospital in Boston who have cared for Katerina agree that Mrs. de Sousa is a very fine mother who has always taken very good care of her daughter."

As time wore on, the de Sousas began to feel isolated and bitter. Eurico's father died of a stroke in November, 2002, without knowing whether Nicola and Eurico would be able to keep his only grandchild. Katerina, who had overheard the caseworkers say "We're not going to take her today" on their first visit to the de Sousas' home, had nightmares about being placed in foster care. Some acquaintances and friends stopped speaking to the family when they heard that Nicola was being investigated for child abuse. In the grocery store, when neighbors saw Nicola, they escaped to another aisle. The de Sousas hired four lawyers and spent about fifteen thousand dollars on Nicola's defense. They began writing indignant letters, some of them rather ill considered, to various officials, members of the press, and politicians who they thought should know about their ordeal. They became increasingly terrified of losing Katerina.

In May, 2003, the de Sousas received a letter. It was very short, and its tone was dispassionate. It said, "I am writing to advise you that the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa will be closing its file. . . . I trust the above is satisfactory."

Though the accusations against Nicola have been shelved, she is still shaken, and bewildered. She said, "I asked them, 'How could you say we put our daughter under the knife for surgeries that are unnecessary? How could you be threatening to take our child away?' We went to the ends of the earth to help her. I just hope they'd do the same if it were their child." ♦



GUY BILLOUT

ANNALS OF WAR

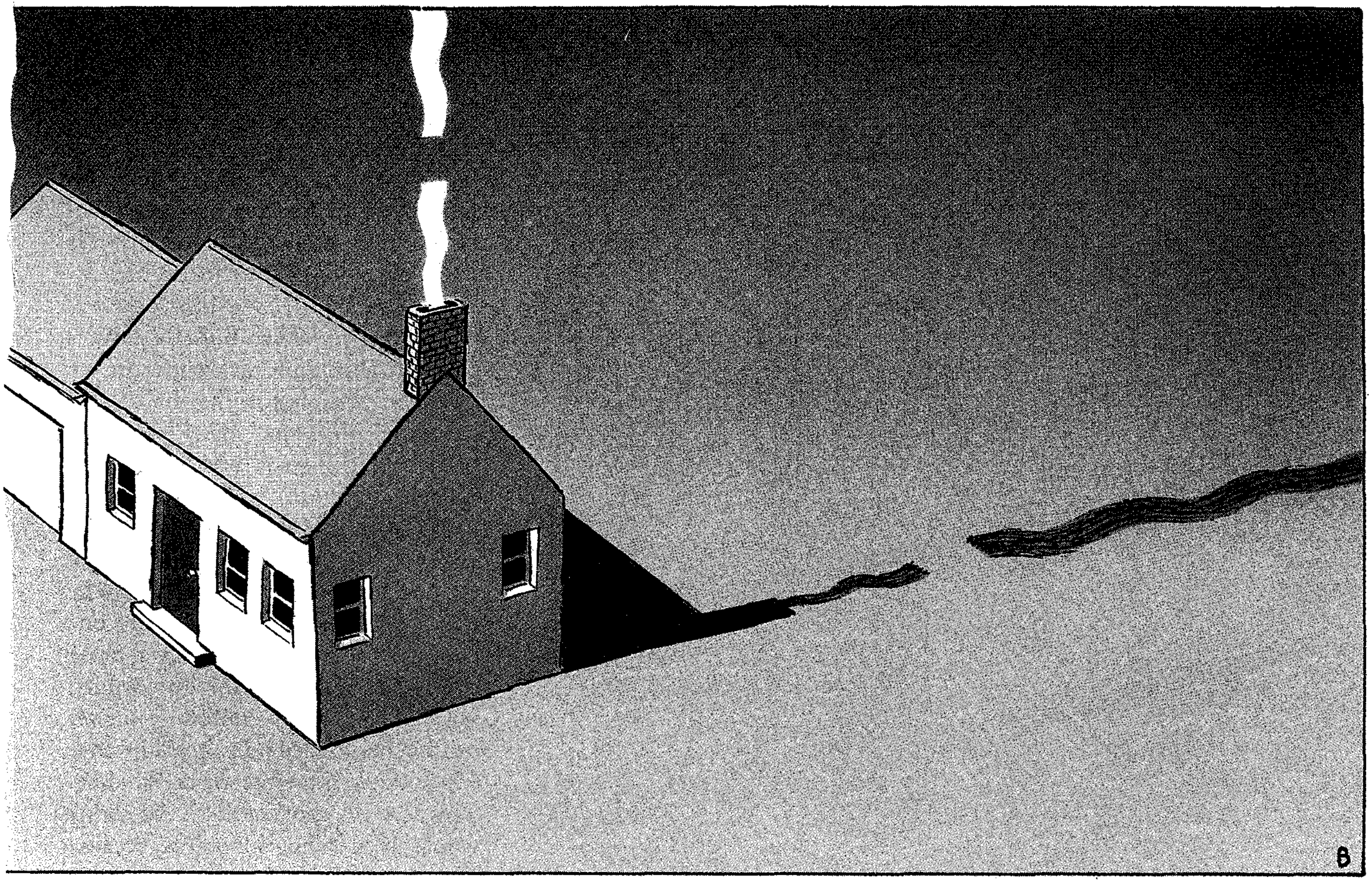
TWO SOLDIERS

How the dead come home.

BY DAN BAUM

As a unit of the élite 82nd Airborne Division, Bravo Company found itself in some of the fiercest fighting last year during the advance on Baghdad. Its hundred-and-thirty-odd paratroopers are among the Army's best-trained and best-equipped soldiers, and none died during formal hostilities. The dying came later, after President Bush declared the mission accomplished. Bravo Company was assigned to garrison a teardrop-shaped sector of southern Baghdad defined by a hairpin bend in the Tigris River. The paratroopers, having trained to fight uniformed regiments in open combat, found themselves in an amorphous grind of guard duty, police work, and civil governance. Their main task was protecting the Al Dora oil refinery, but they were also responsible for keeping peace in a large area around it. The district embraced by the river is a pleasantly verdant but particularly hostile corner of Iraq. Many top officials of the Baathist regime owned mansions in the neighborhood, and though they fled the war, their sympathizers remained, doling out hundred-dollar payments to poor date farmers willing to plant a bomb or fire a mortar at the Americans. The area is also home to several radical mosques, behind one of which the paratroopers uncovered a huge weapons cache—among the largest ever found in Iraq. Rockets fired from the brushy banks of the Tigris would drop onto the Green Zone of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and Bravo Company prowled the darkness with night-vision scopes, searching for the shooters. The postwar work was hot, nerve-racking, complicated, and dispiriting. The paratroopers spent hours trying to organize local councils, never knowing if the same people smiling at them by day were firing mortars at them by night. On June 18th of last year, a Bravo Company soldier named Michael Deuel, away from the unit on temporary assignment to battalion headquarters, was guarding a propane station when an Iraqi walked up behind him, stuck the muzzle of a gun under the lip of his Kevlar helmet, and pulled the trigger. It was Bravo Company's first death in Iraq, and though the paratroopers did not witness it firsthand, they were shaken.

An endlessly flat, treeless desert, seemingly of kitty litter, begins within half a kilometre of the Tigris, but the copious bush of the riverside and the inscrutable hostility of the locals led the men of Bravo Company to call their assigned dis-



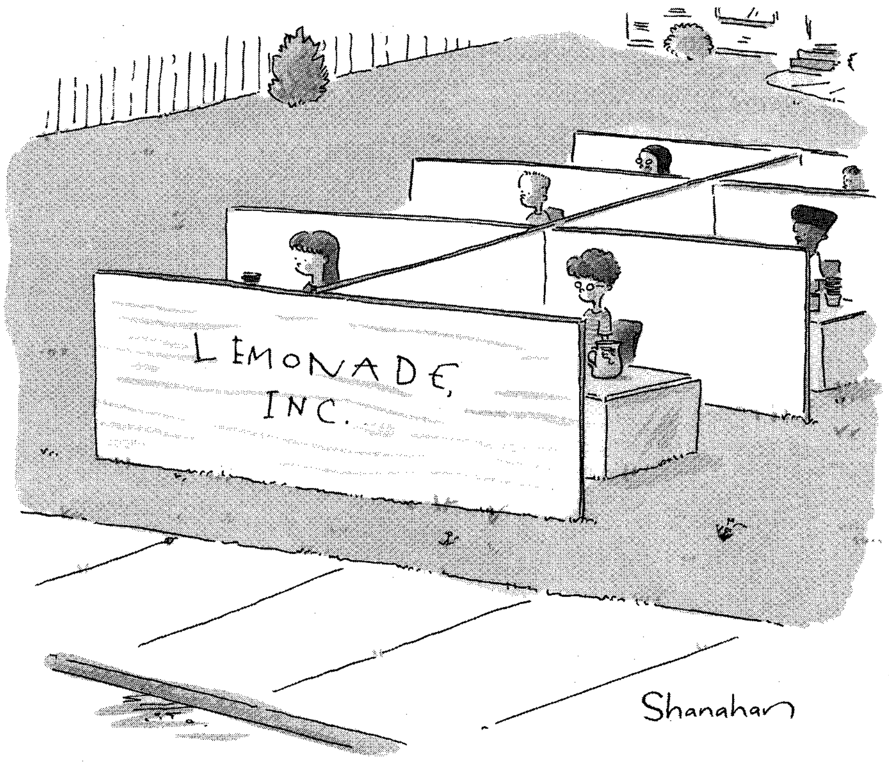
trict Mini-Vietnam. Marshes, date-palm orchards, and water-filled ditches held Bravo Company to a few roads, not much wider than their squat Humvees, which were vulnerable to attack by rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and "improvised explosive devices." The soldiers gave the roads names: Ambush Alley, R.P.G. Alley, I.E.D. Alley. One road in Bravo Company's district, though, seemed peaceful, and it was called, simply, River Road.

Though the district was treacherous, the soldiers of Bravo Company lived in the relative comfort of the Al Dora refinery offices, playing Madden N.F.L. on a PlayStation 2 in their off-hours. From M.C.I., which was setting up cell-phone service for the Coalition Provisional Authority, they cadged a cell phone with a Westchester County area code. They couldn't call out, but family and friends could call in, by dialling 914 and the number—a far cry from, say, the sporadic V-mail of the Second World War. For months, Bravo Company ate nothing but M.R.E.s, packaged rations that, though monotonous, are lean and sanitary. When the Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root showed up, in July, to open a field kitchen, the rich, fried food, perhaps in combination with new microorganisms, made everyone in the company sick for a few days.

Of the thirty-nine paratroopers who belonged to Bravo Company's 3rd Platoon, no two could have been more different than Specialist Solomon Bangayan, a Philippine citizen serving in American uniform, and Specialist Marc Seiden, a Jew from New Jersey. Bangayan was tiny and shy. He stood five feet five inches tall, and his smooth complexion and glossy black hair made him look about fifteen years old. He'd joined the Army in the spring of 2001, about eight months after arriving in the United States from the Philippines, and spoke halting, schoolbook English. For him, soldiering was a means to attain citizenship in the United States and to accrue money for an education in nursing. But he applied a grim resolve to proving his worth as a soldier. Once, searching for weapons in an Iraqi house, he kicked an unyielding door so hard that he landed on his back. He got up and kicked it again and again until another soldier nudged him aside and blasted the lock with a riot gun. The men of Bravo Company gave him the nickname Bang and called his mangled diction Banglish. In a crowd of big, loud white guys, he gravitated to a quiet friendship with Specialist Ricardo Costas, a delicate, latte-colored Puerto Rican with enormous, long-lashed eyes whose squad leader called him Sweetness.

Seiden, tall and broad-chested, from Brigantine, New Jersey, was the company clown. His rugged face, ceaseless ribbing, and New Jersey accent reminded fellow-paratroopers of the actor Bruce Willis. Seiden never let up; in the middle of a firefight, he would turn to a comrade and ask, "Do I look fat?" Pumping out light-machine-gun rounds—with rocket-propelled grenades whizzing past—he would pause to ask, "Do you think my butt's getting big?" At twenty-six, Seiden was older than most of his brothers-in-arms, and he thrived on the excitement and rigor of Army life. He was a post-9/11 enlistee, inspired to join, in part, by

"I have an important message to deliver from the Secretary of the Army," one of the officers at the door said. "May I come in?"



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the death of a family friend in the World Trade Center attack. He planned to reënlist; last Christmas, he started filling out the forms to become a helicopter pilot.

On January 2, 2004, the 3rd Platoon roused early. It was a Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, a day when clerics in Mini-Vietnam were known to preach mischief. The 3rd Platoon was to take two Humvees and drive down River Road to patrol the Salah al-Din mosque, or Celine Dion mosque, as the soldiers called it. Farther down River Road, at the southeast corner of Bravo Company's district, lay the Tobah mosque, which was thought to be Wahhabi-influenced and deserving of special attention. Of the company's seven Humvees, two were "up armored"—plated heavily enough to deflect rifle fire—and the 3rd Platoon was given both for this mission. The platoon's leader, First Lieutenant Andrew Blickhahn, a balding twenty-six-year-old two years out of West Point, took the shotgun seat of the lead Humvee, the post responsible for spotting any mines in the road. Seiden started to get in beside him, but at the last moment, for reasons nobody remembers, he switched places with Sweetness. Seiden walked back to the second Humvee and took the shotgun seat. Bang slipped into the seat behind him, in the gunner's hatch.

The two Humvees left the refinery compound at about 11 A.M. and headed down a road lined with palms. Calls to prayer issued from mosques, and passersby glared at the soldiers. About ten kilometres down the road, Blickhahn's lead Humvee went around an S-shaped double bend, losing sight of the Humvee behind. Sweetness, his head and torso protruding from the roof beside a huge .50-calibre machine gun, was knocked over by a tremendous blast; he thought his Humvee had been hit. Behind him, though, he could see a cloud rising fast from the date palms. Explosives alone make white smoke; this was oily black, and swirling with debris.

Blickhahn jumped out and ran back down the road. Guerrillas often follow mine blasts with small-arms fire and R.P.G.s, so he fired his rifle randomly in every direction as he ran. Blickhahn's driver, meanwhile, jerked the Humvee through a feverish five-point turn and caught up with Blickhahn at the bend. All they found of the second, up-armored Humvee was a smoky hole in the pavement, and, lying nearby, one door, as thick and heavy as the door of an office safe. The rest of the vehicle had flown across the highway and landed in a deep ditch. The air reeked of explosives and diesel fuel. From where Blickhahn and his driver stood on the road, the thick armor of the Humvee's passenger side looked like shredded cardboard. Blickhahn had never lost a soldier in combat, but before he even climbed down into the ditch he could see that Seiden had absorbed the bulk of the blast and was dead. The two soldiers from the driver's side were alive but badly wounded. One of them, wounded in the throat, was gurgling, "Help me." Bang, who had been behind Seiden, was nowhere to be seen.

Blickhahn expected to be attacked at any moment. "We were waiting for the Chinese to come over the wall" is how he remembers it. From the roof of the undamaged Humvee, Sweetness was firing the .50-calibre machine gun wildly, pouring streams of one-ounce bullets into ditches, garden walls, bushes—anywhere attackers might have been hiding. This was his third ambush; he didn't worry about killing innocents, because he assumed that every civilian in this part of Baghdad had known about the attack ahead of time and stayed away. Blickhahn, focussed on the casualties, was so distraught that when he radioed for a medevac helicopter he couldn't figure out which six-digit map coördinate to give. Two helicopters took off anyway and headed in his general direction. Blickhahn was eventually able to radio the helicopters the right coördinates; within ten minutes, they had landed beside the road. The company's first sergeant, Brett Robinson, monitoring radio traffic at the refinery, heard Blickhahn's call for medevac. He came roaring in with the 2nd Platoon and set up a perimeter to repel attacks. One of the injured soldiers was stuck under the Humvee and unconscious, and the helicopter medics, nervous about a further attack, wanted to amputate his leg to free him. Amid the roar of the helicopters, the Bravo Company soldiers ended up in a shouting match with the Air Force medics; they almost came to blows before another Humvee managed to winch the wrecked vehicle. The soldier's leg, as it turned out, was buried in soft mud and barely hurt.

Blickhahn and another soldier found a wire in the six-foot crater left by the bomb, and followed it about a hundred yards through the bush to a well-dug fighting position. The position, which had a good view of the road, looked to Blickhahn like the work of trained soldiers, but whoever had set off the bomb had simply touched two wire ends to a battery and fled. The expected attack never came.

Blickhahn returned to find a group of soldiers huddled over Bang. They'd found him about fifteen feet behind the wrecked Humvee; he'd been blown out the gunner's hatch and was less visibly torn up than Seiden. As the men tried to insert a tube into his airway, they realized that he was dead, too. First Sergeant Robinson covered Bang and Seiden with ponchos, helped load them onto the back deck of a Humvee, and ordered four men to climb up beside them to keep the bodies covered.

Bang and Seiden now entered the world of Mortuary Affairs, the Army's hidden but exquisitely reverent system for returning fallen soldiers to their families. Every job in the Army has a numerical designation—infantrymen are 11B, medics are 91W, truck drivers are 88M—and those who handle the dead go by the designation 92M, or "ninety-two mike." Mortuary Affairs is a small specialty. The active-duty Army, of nearly half a million soldiers, has only one company of ninety-two mikes—the 54th Mortuary Affairs Company—consisting of two hundred and twenty-five men and women. (The Army is slated to create a second Mortuary Affairs company in 2006.)

Ninety-two mikes are trained in six and a half weeks at Fort Lee, Virginia, by Douglas Howard, a sixty-three-year-old civilian mortician who served as a Mortuary Affairs specialist during the Vietnam War. (The designation was then fifty-seven foxtrot.) Howard's face is deeply lined, but his hair and mustache are inky black. He chose his profession after being told, as a high-school senior, that his personality suited the business; he moves with stiff formality and speaks in soft, clipped tones. The Army has no trouble filling its ninety-two-mike slots with volunteers, Howard said. Many grow up in mortuary families. Others recognize in themselves a capacity for serenity in the face of death. They visit a morgue in nearby Richmond during their training, and Howard watches them closely; he weeds out those who blanch, freeze, or—worse—make jokes in the presence of the dead. At the vaulted warehouse where the ninety-two mikes are trained using hundred-and-seventy-five-pound mannequins, Howard introduced me to Captain Kelly Dobert, a twenty-nine-year-old West Point graduate, who in January will take command of the 54th in Iraq. Dobert is thin and pale, with blond hair and dark circles under her eyes, but she lit up in a bright smile when she shook my hand. "This is the command I requested," she said. "It really touched my heart." Mortuary Affairs is a lonely and subdued specialty. Other soldiers wear insignia to identify their function—crossed cannons for artillery, a screaming eagle for the 101st Airborne—but Mortuary Affairs has no unit patch of its own. Members of the company keep to themselves, in order to protect other soldiers' morale. Other units take two-fisted mottoes—"Death from Above," "Sledgehammer," "No Slack." The motto of Mortuary Affairs is "Dignity, Reverence, Respect."

When an Army division goes into combat, ninety-two mikes quietly establish collection points in discreet locations. Company commanders typically know where they are; soldiers typically don't. A collection point is nothing more than a couple of litters on sawhorses, a hand-washing station composed of a steel basin and a jerrican hung in a wooden frame, and a small desk for paperwork. Camouflage netting covers the station, and a one-square-foot sign announces its function: "Mortuary Affairs Collection Point." A green, generator-powered refrigeration container big enough for twelve bodies stands outside. Six ninety-two mikes generally man a collection point.

Sometimes a unit that has lost soldiers in battle is in no condition to recover its dead, and the nearest ninety-two mikes venture out to gather up the fallen. Usually, though, a unit delivers its own dead to the collection point, in what is officially called a "human-remains pouch," made of thick, rubberized canvas with a steel zipper and loop handles along the sides. Everybody but the ninety-two mikes calls these body bags. (Bravo Company covered Bang and Seiden with ponchos because the unit wasn't travelling with pouches that day.) Soldiers are often distraught when they show up at a collection point carrying dead friends, and the first job of the ninety-two mikes is to assure them that their friends' remains will be cared for. Only when all of a dead soldier's buddies have left the collection point do the ninety-two mikes lift the pouch onto a raised litter and open it.

Throughout the Second World War, the dead were sometimes buried in temporary cemeteries near the battlefield. Often, though, combat soldiers buried their buddies where they fell, marked the

"I never think of you as, like, old Jack. I think of you as, like, retro."

graves with a rifle and helmet, and noted the coördinates on a map. Families learned of the death by telegram, often days later. Only after the Allies defeated Germany and Japan did the Army send soldiers of what was then called Graves Registration to recover bodies and either bury them in military cemeteries abroad or ship them home, depending on the wishes of the families. Of the four hundred thousand Americans who died in that war, the remains of about a fifth have never been recovered or identified. America now fights smaller wars, and takes more care with its dead. During the Korean War, helicopters became available, allowing remains to be recovered and shipped home quickly. When I mentioned to Howard how ceremonious and expensive the handling of fallen soldiers seems, given the chaos of war, he fixed me with a cold stare and said, "It is, quite literally, the least we can do for them."

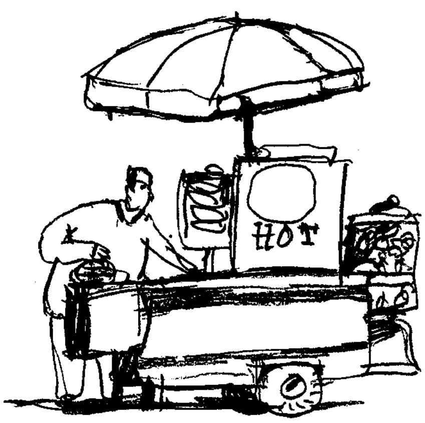
The mission of a ninety-two mike is to deliver viewable remains to the family of a dead soldier within seven to ten days, and the job starts at the collection point. Wearing surgical masks, gowns, and gloves, ninety-two mikes make a preliminary examination of the body, sketching visible wounds on a diagram. They leave a soldier's fatigues intact but search every pocket, cataloguing the photographs, letters, notes, and other effects they find. They either return these to the pockets or place them in a small green bag that they tie to the soldier's wrist. They list the name of the deceased, on all forms, as B.T.B.—"believed to be." Once they've recorded the wounds and belongings, they rezip the pouch and place it, by tradition, in a closed vehicle for transportation either by road or by air to the Theatre Mortuary Evacuation Point, an air-conditioned warehouse in Kuwait.

There, ninety-two mikes place the pouch on a wooden slab similar to an oak tabletop and set the slab atop an old-fashioned roller-conveyor, of the type found in supermarket basements. As they slide the body along the conveyor, they examine the remains again, making sure all personal effects listed on the forms are in place. Finally, they lift the pouched remains into a rectangular aluminum "transfer case" and drape the case with a flag, placing the starred blue field at the upper left, over the soldier's heart. They carry the case, feet first, to a truck that will take it to one of several military airfields. When they need to set the case down, they always lay it flat on the floor. They never stack cases unless a mass-casualty emergency yields limited floor space. Once on the trucks, the transfer cases leave the custody of the ninety-two mikes.

Ritual and tradition attend every step of a dead soldier's journey. At the airfield, soldiers and airmen stand at attention, flanking the ramp. Others unload the cases and carry them into the bulbous cargo bay of an Air Force transport jet. They lay them on the floor in a neat grid. It was photographs of flag-draped transfer cases—not "coffins"—on the floor of a transfer jet that made the rounds of the Internet and major newspapers in April. From Kuwait, the transfer cases are flown to one of two military mortuaries: at Dover Air Force Base, in Delaware, or at the Army's Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany.

The bodies of Specialists Bangayan and Seiden took a slightly different route. Their friends drove them not to a collection point but, following their two wounded buddies, to the 28th Combat Support Hospital, in Baghdad. The 28th C.S.H.—known as "the China Dragon"—occupies what used to be Saddam Hussein's private hospital, inside the vast compound of palaces that is now the heavily secured Green Zone. Until recently, the person who ran the hospital, under the command of Colonel Beverly Pritchett, was First Sergeant Kellyanne O'Neil, a forty-one-year-old medic with a gun-moll accent acquired in the Dorchester section of Boston. I met O'Neil, who rotated out of Iraq in March, at her home in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where the 82nd Airborne is based. O'Neil, who keeps a piranha as a pet, has long wavy hair that she pulls back in a severe bun, and tiny hands that are as strong as pliers. She is compact, radiating ferocity, but can in a heartbeat adopt the mournful air of a grieving mother. Known to many soldiers only by her radio call sign, China Master, O'Neil directed the hospital's renovation and then the care of thousands of casualties—Iraqi and American, military and civilian—a hundred and twenty-five of whom died during the months she was there. She is intensely proud of the 28th C.S.H., describing, in gruesome detail, the endless variety of wounds repaired by the hospital's surgeons. China Master was essentially on duty continually for nearly a year, overseeing emergency procedures in the hospital's hallways, sometimes pulling a sheet over the face of a patient she had lost and walking directly to the next stretcher. "When I'm in the nuthouse, I want you to remember I like Hershey's Kisses with almonds in them," she told me without smiling. The day of the attack on Bravo Company, China Master worked first on the two wounded soldiers—both serious enough cases that they had to be evacuated to Landstuhl. She then turned her attention to Seiden and Bang.

It was her habit to undress the dead and cut the name, rank, and unit patches from their fatigues, if they weren't too bloody or torn, to send to the family as keepsakes. From Seiden's, she was able to salvage only the American-flag shoulder patch. She then had Bang and Seiden moved to a small tiled room and used a hose gently to wash the mud and gore from their bodies. "If the unit is coming to see the soldier, I try to make a nice viewing," she told me. She put the bodies in fresh pouches, with blankets around all but the undamaged portions of the faces. (Bang and Seiden were among the last that she would attend this way. In mid-January, the Army ordered her to stop removing fatigues and washing bodies, because medical examiners at the morgues wanted to see all bodies unaltered—as the ninety-two mikes leave them—to learn what they can about how soldiers are dying.)



While China Master worked, the paratroopers of Bravo Company returned to their billets in the offices of the Al Dora oil refinery. Nobody spoke as the men peeled off their web gear,

THE KINDNESS OF THE BLIND

A poet is reading to the blind.
He did not suspect it was so hard.
His voice is breaking.
His hands are shaking.
He feels that here each sentence
is put to the test of the dark.
It will have to fend for itself,
without the lights or colors.
A perilous adventure
for the stars in his poems,
for the dawn, the rainbow, the clouds, neon lights, the moon,
for the fish until now so silver under water,
and the hawk so silently high in the sky.
He is reading—for it is too late to stop—
of a boy in a jacket yellow in the green meadow,
of red rooftops easy to spot in the valley,
the restless numbers on the players' shirts,
and a nude stranger in the door cracked open.
He would like to pass over—though it's not an option—
all those saints on the cathedral's ceiling,
that farewell wave from the train window,
the microscope lens, ray of light in the gem,
video screens, and mirrors, and the album with faces.
Yet great is the kindness of the blind,
great their compassion and generosity.
They listen, smile, and clap.
One of them even approaches
with a book held topsy-turvy
to ask for an invisible autograph.

—*Wislawa Szymborska*

(Translated, from the Polish, by Justyna Kostkowska.)

helmets, and body armor. After ten months of war and insurrection, Bang and Seiden were the first comrades they'd seen killed, and they were distraught. One of the unit's N.C.O.s kept bursting into tears. "My platoon sergeant took me aside and said, 'You can't do that. You can't cry in front of the others,' " he told me. Staff Sergeant James Haack, a square-jawed twenty-two-year-old Kansan who'd been both dead soldiers' original squad leader, said, "I know it sounds funny, but it hadn't occurred to me this could happen." Captain Leo Coddington, Bravo Company's twenty-eight-year-old commander, wondered if the platoon had established a pattern of travel on River Road which the Iraqis were somehow able to divine. Lieutenant Blickhahn, who had been riding shotgun in the lead Humvee, replayed in his mind the moments preceding the blast and tortured himself for failing to spot the bomb in the road. He learned later that the massive explosive, made from old artillery shells, had been buried under the pavement by someone tunnelling in from the roadside ditch, a technique never seen before in the area. (In July, Blickhahn was awarded an Army Commendation Medal for his actions that day. The medal can be awarded for "meritorious service," but Blickhahn's was awarded with a bronze "V," for valor. Soldiers, though, are the harshest judges of their own performance. Months after the deaths, Blickhahn told me, "They defeated me.")

Several soldiers helped pack up Seiden's and Bang's belongings for shipment to the Army's Personnel Effects Depot, at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, in Maryland: books, CD players, toiletries, Seiden's GameBoy. Soldiers at Aberdeen would clean and pack them for delivery to the families. Following Army procedure, Coddington made sure that Bravo Company's cell phone and the soldiers' e-mail-capable computers were rounded up so that no news would slip out before the families of Bang and Seiden were notified officially. But Seiden's girlfriend, Tricia Ferri, happened to call before the phone was removed. Everyone in Bravo Company knew Tricia; she'd sent boxes of Oreos and had spoken to most of them when calling for Seiden. Usually, they answered with a cheerful "Hello," but this time the soldier who picked it up said gravely, "Second of the 325th." When he heard Tricia's voice, he hung up.

At three o'clock in the morning, Coddington finally had time to go see his fallen men at the hospital. First Sergeant Robinson, eight years his senior, who has eighteen years of Army experience to Coddington's seven, was still there, and China Master was still working. Coddington had held himself together all day, but when China Master opened the pouches and he laid his hands on his soldiers' bodies he leaned against Robinson and wept.

The Army relied for generations on Western Union to deliver to families the news that their sons and husbands had been killed in combat. At the start of the Vietnam War, the Army discovered that in some cities Western Union no longer employed its own messengers but relied on local taxi-drivers to deliver telegrams. In the vicinity of Fort Benning, Georgia, where many of the fallen had been based, the cabdrivers didn't welcome the responsibility. So the Army began assigning its own soldiers to break the bad news to families personally.

Gail Seiden, Marc's mother, woke on January 2nd to the news of a helicopter crash near Falluja, and told herself, in a semiconscious moment of superstition, "O.K., I'm home free. I don't have to worry about today." Gail, who is fifty-eight, plump, and bookish, with short curly hair and a sense of irony that can swing bitter or

"It's too hot to strive for autonomy."

funny, helps manage a Jewish nursing home near her house. Her husband, Jack, fifty-six, is an accountant—gentle, sedentary, and instinctively risk-averse. Gail and Jack had lived in a state of mild shock since the day Marc was born. He was, progressively, the kind of kid who would shove coins into electrical sockets, skateboard off the roof, or, at sixteen, take the family car on a joyride. His sheer physical energy and passion for excitement were utterly alien to them, and they spent his childhood years alternatively cringing, laughing, or hollering at him to be careful.

Jack and Gail invited me to dinner in a cozy two-story row house in East Windsor whose walls are covered with pictures of Marc and his older brother, Adam. "I'd actually suggested when Marc was nineteen that he join the Army," Jack said, as Gail cut up cantaloupe at the kitchen counter. "I thought the discipline was what he needed. In those days, nobody thought about war." Instead, Marc tried a year of college, then drifted down to Brigantine, a small town north of Atlantic City and one of the few places on the American coastline where the working class still holds the beach. He got a construction job, fell in love with Tricia, and lived an easygoing seaside life with Tricia and her childhood friends. Jack and Gail thought he seemed on the verge of settling down. But as his adolescence slipped away Marc grew restless. The son of some family friends died in the World Trade Center attack, and during the national outpouring of fear and patriotism that followed Marc announced that he was joining the Army. He selected a particularly dangerous specialty, airborne, and flew to Iraq with Bravo Company in March, 2003. Marc's phone calls home were upbeat, but, as Gail recalls, "I lived every day with my heart in my mouth." Last Thanksgiving, Marc called them excitedly; he'd been chosen to share President Bush's surprise Thanksgiving dinner in Baghdad. The Seidens happened to be watching the Presidential dinner on television at that moment, and they had the extraordinary experience of catching a glimpse of their son in the background as he talked to them on the phone. It was the last time they saw him.

The Seidens had just returned from errands at around four o'clock in the afternoon on January 2nd—midnight in Baghdad—when the doorbell rang. Gail was upstairs; Jack opened the door to find two officers in dress uniform—a woman and a man with a silver cross pinned to his collar. "Are you Jack Seiden, father of Specialist Marc Seiden?" the woman asked. "I have an important message to deliver from the Secretary of the Army. May I come in, Mr. Seiden?" In shock, Jack refused. "We'd been told if one person comes to the door, he's wounded; if two people come, he's dead," Jack told me. "I thought, If I don't let them in then it can't be happening. But she kept saying, 'Mr. Seiden, we have to come in, we have to come in.' She was crying." Jack backed away, yelling for Gail. From the top of the stairs, Gail saw a pair of uniformed legs and thought, Marc's home early! As she ran down the stairs, she saw the second pair of legs.

The woman introduced herself as an officer from Fort Dix, New Jersey. "The Secretary of the Army has asked me to express his deep regret that your son Marc was killed in action in Iraq on January 2nd," she said. "The Secretary extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family in your tragic loss."

Notification officers follow a careful protocol detailed in a slim booklet called the "Casualty Notification Guide." They are not to speak to N.O.K., as the booklet calls next of kin, about insurance, personal effects, or possible mistakes made by soldiers involved in the death. They are to use "good judgment" and avoid "gory or embarrassing details." They are not to extend "overly sympathetic gestures." Underlined, with the heading "IMPORTANT," is the warning "Do not physically touch the N.O.K. in any manner unless there is shock or fainting." The woman from Fort Dix told the Seidens that a casualty assistance officer would be assigned to handle all of their funeral arrangements and would call within twenty-four hours. "Mr. Seiden," she concluded, "I must be returning to Fort Dix. Again, on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, please accept the United States Army's deepest condolences."

Helen Bangayan, Bang's mother, left the Philippines in 1981, at the age of thirty-three, to work as a companion to a wealthy, stroke-afflicted American woman in Beirut. She left two-year-old Solomon and his three older sisters to grow up with their father, Max, in Sudipen, a torpid, underemployed village of brightly painted cement houses a day's drive north of Manila. Solomon acquired the nickname Kelly to honor his paternal great-grandfather, Quilino.

Helen did not return to Max. Instead, she moved to the United States with her employer, got a green card, and, after the woman died, met Victor Therrien at a church social in New Hampshire. Vic, a voluble, pious, retired construction worker, took her to live in a farmhouse on Vermont's border with Canada. Vic had five grown children of his own and made it his mission to reunite Helen with hers. It was too late for the older children to immigrate, Vic learned; children of permanent residents have to make it to the U.S. before they turn twenty-one if they want to get green cards. By the time Vic was able to arrange the visa for Kelly, he was seven days short of his twenty-first birthday, and had to abandon his schooling as a diesel mechanic to emigrate. He arrived in Vermont in August of 2000, barely able to speak English.

To make him feel welcome, Vic bought Kelly a used Ford Taurus. "I asked him what he wanted most, and he said in the Philippines if you have a Ford it means you're rich," Vic said. Kelly spent that winter skiing at nearby Jay Peak, riding horses, and delighting in his first snow. But it didn't take him long to realize that immigrating and prospering were two different things; he'd landed in a region with high unemployment, and he had limited English and no diploma. So in the spring of 2001 Kelly did what thousands of immigrants have done to get ahead; he joined the United States Army. A recruiter met the Therriens on the roadside halfway between Burlington and their home, and they completed the paperwork on the car's hood. Non-citizen immigrants have served in the U.S. military since the Civil War, and join for many of the same reasons that Americans do—pay, skills, adventure, love of country—but service in an American uniform has also long been a fast track to citizenship. Beginning in 1952, a legal resident who joined the Army could shorten the wait for citizenship from five years to three. After 9/11, an executive order by President Bush and legislation by Congress made the process easier and faster—waiving immigration fees, letting non-citizens on active duty petition for citizenship immediately instead of after three years, allowing immigrant service people to raise their right hand and take the oath of citizenship at military posts abroad instead of having to travel to the U.S. at their own expense. The services don't specifically go trolling for immigrants to join, though they publish recruiting materials in Spanish and seek out Arabic speakers, who are needed in Iraq as translators. Some thirty-eight thousand service people—about three per cent of the total—are non-citizens.

Vic and Helen Therrien viewed Kelly's enlistment with pride; Vic is a Navy veteran, and expresses a patriotism as pure as his faith in Jesus. Their confidence was only slightly shaken by Kelly's phone calls—he dragged them out for hours, unwilling to let go of the sound of his mother's voice. When he came home on leave last Thanksgiving, he told them he did not want to return to Iraq. He'd seen too many terrible things, he said, and he was afraid he would die there. Vic and Helen drove him to the tiny River of Life church, in northern New Hampshire, where Vic's sister is pastor, and Kelly accepted Jesus as his personal savior. "We didn't know he was going back to be killed, but God knew," Vic said. "God saw to it his heart was prepared." After his leave, Bang flew back to rejoin Bravo Company in Mini-Vietnam. At about eight o'clock on the night of January 2nd, Vic and Helen heard their dogs barking in the freezing darkness outside. Helen opened the door on two officers. "Please tell me he's only wounded," she cried. The officers asked to step inside.

At the Dover mortuary, military medical examiners inspected Bang and Seiden to determine the cause of death and to gather intelligence about methods that the Iraqis are using to kill American soldiers. Under a practice new to Operation Iraqi Freedom, they sorted through personal items that had been shipped with the remains to find what they call "sentimental personal effects"—watches, rings, medallions, and other items that families might want to have at the time of the funeral. They gathered

"You're carrying a lot of pretension in your back."

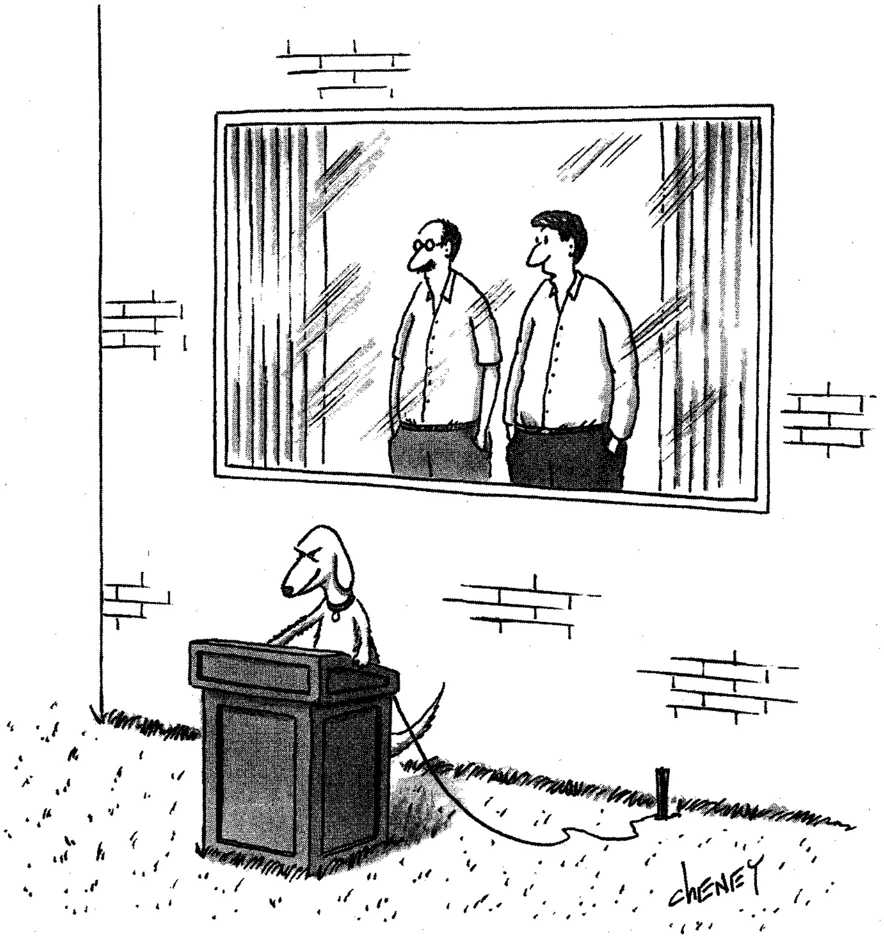
these in velveteen pouches to send with the caskets.

The mortuary has enormous warehouses, filled with every uniform, award, and insignia of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. Drawing on the personnel files of Bang and Seiden, civilian morticians decorated forest-green "Class A" Army dress uniforms with silver jump wings, marksmanship medals, insignias, and myriad patches specific to each. Both men were posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. The mortuary is extremely careful about the allocation of medals; a missing or incorrect award can infuriate family members. Morticians then dressed and "cosmetized" Bang and Seiden and placed each in the type of casket his family had chosen—wood for Seiden, silver-colored eighteen-gauge metal for Bang.

The morticians make one of three recommendations for the soldier's remains: viewable, viewable for identification purposes only, or non-viewable. In non-viewable cases, the Dover or Landstuhl morticians inject each body part individually with embalming fluid and gather the pieces in a sheet that has been impregnated with embalming chemicals. They wrap this in a second sheet, and finally in a standard-issue olive-green Army blanket. They fold the blanket in a distinctive cruciform fashion, secure it with large safety pins, and place the bundle in a casket. They arrange the decorated uniform on the bundle of remains, so that when the family looks inside the casket they see the correct uniform, more or less in the shape of a soldier. The Army does not require families to view remains; the medical examiners, along with the F.B.I., make the positive identification. But some families insist on opening the bundle and seeing what the Army has deemed non-viewable. "They've sent away their nineteen-year-old son, and they can't believe he's gone. They want to see it," Douglas Howard, the ninety-two-mike trainer at Fort Lee, explained. In such cases, Howard recommends that only one family member, or a family friend, look.

It is remarkable that the morticians at Dover were able to render both Bang and Seiden viewable from the waist up, given the size of the bomb that killed them and the extent of the damage. Seiden's only visible wound was what looked like a port-wine birthmark on his face and neck. The right side of Bang's face was reconstructed with wax, but it was recognizable. When the Dover morticians finished, Bang and Seiden parted ways.

A soldier in dress uniform and carrying the velveteen bag of sentimental effects escorted each casket to the funeral homes the families had selected. The Army also assigned each family a casualty assistance officer, to manage arrangements for the funeral. "I'm not the biggest fan of the Army, but I have to say, ours was terrific," Gail Seiden said of the officer assigned to the family. "He took care of everything. Everything." Jewish law requires the dead to be buried as quickly as possible, and the Seidens wanted Marc home fast. "And no autopsy, I told them," Gail said. "He's been mutilated enough." The Army assigned the Seidens a rabbi chaplain, who hurried Marc's body home and met it at Dover to prevent an autopsy. He recovered the velveteen bag; it contained Marc's dog tags and a key ring. Gail had wanted Marc buried in a Jewish cemetery, but, knowing that the Army meant more to him than Judaism did, she and Jack decided to have him buried in the vast Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery, about forty minutes from their house. "They asked us if we wanted a general funeral, and I said, 'Sure,' thinking, you know, a general funeral, like a regular funeral," Jack said. "They sent a general." Since September 11th, any service member killed in action is entitled to have a general preside over his or her funeral. Marc was buried on January 7th, just five days after he died, six thousand miles away. It was bitter cold; his friends from Brigantine remember their tears freezing to their faces. A detachment from Fort Bragg carried Marc's casket to a bier under a canopy. The general knelt before the Seidens and presented the flag and, in a velvet box, Marc's medals. Seven soldiers fired three rifle volleys, and a bugler played "Taps."



"He was abandoned in the D.C. area as a puppy and raised by a pack of senators."

At first glance, military funerals seem cold and mechanical; every service is alike and everybody moves in jerky tin-soldier fashion. But in its exaggerated solemnity—the slow-motion way the general salutes the casket, the crispness with which the flag is folded into a triangle—a military funeral movingly conveys the grief of the institution. It's a Jewish custom for mourners to sprinkle a shovelful of dirt atop the lowered casket, but the cemetery didn't allow families to approach the gravesite, and on this the cemetery wouldn't budge. "The rabbi said he'd go up there, say a prayer, and put some dirt," Jack said.

Helen Therrien had a special request, too; she wanted her son buried in the Philippines with full U.S. military honors. Bang made it home to Sudipen on January 16th, two weeks after he was killed. The Army flew Helen there (Vic was in the hospital at the time), and she and her daughters used the emergency-expenses money provided by the Army to buy and roast eleven pigs for the mourners. Bang lay in an open casket in his sweltering, cement-block house in Sudipen for four days, while hundreds of people came to sit in folding chairs around the casket and sing hymns. The Philippines is overwhelmingly Catholic, but Sudipen is home to four Protestant churches and each sent a choir to sing over the body. In a video, Kelly's childhood friends look stunned, impressed, and subdued. The Philippines, which the United States seized from Spain in 1898 and held for forty-eight years, was the only colony that the United States ever had, and in many Filipinos affection for America runs deep. "A lot of Filipinos joined the U.S. Army in World War Two," Helen told me. She tapped her two index fingers together. "The Philippines and the U.S.," she said. "Like this."

On the fourth day, an honor guard and a one-star general flew in from South Korea to perform Bang's funeral. They marched slowly through Sudipen's cobbled streets ahead of a white Mercedes hearse, then stood at rigid attention in the withering humidity as hundreds of people gathered in an open-air hall. After "Taps," they slid Bang's coffin into an aboveground cement vault and—in keeping with Philippine tradition—pushed in behind it a bag of clothes, to be worn in the afterlife.

"Naturally, there's a trade-off for its exceptional fuel economy."

• •

Kelly had taken out a two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar life-insurance policy, which was paid to Helen, along with the standard twelve-thousand-dollar military death benefit. President Bush sent a letter of sympathy, referring to her son warmly by his nickname, which she laminated and placed in an album. "Our nation will not forget Kelly's sacrifice and selfless dedication in our efforts to make the world more peaceful and more free," the President wrote. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, of the Philippines, sent a letter as well. "We are proud of him," she wrote. On March 5th, another letter came to Helen, from the Citizenship and Immigration Services branch of the Department of Homeland Security: "Your son made the ultimate sacrifice for America; it is only fitting that we bestow upon him our Nation's ultimate honor—citizenship. It is our honor to present you with this certificate of posthumous citizenship."

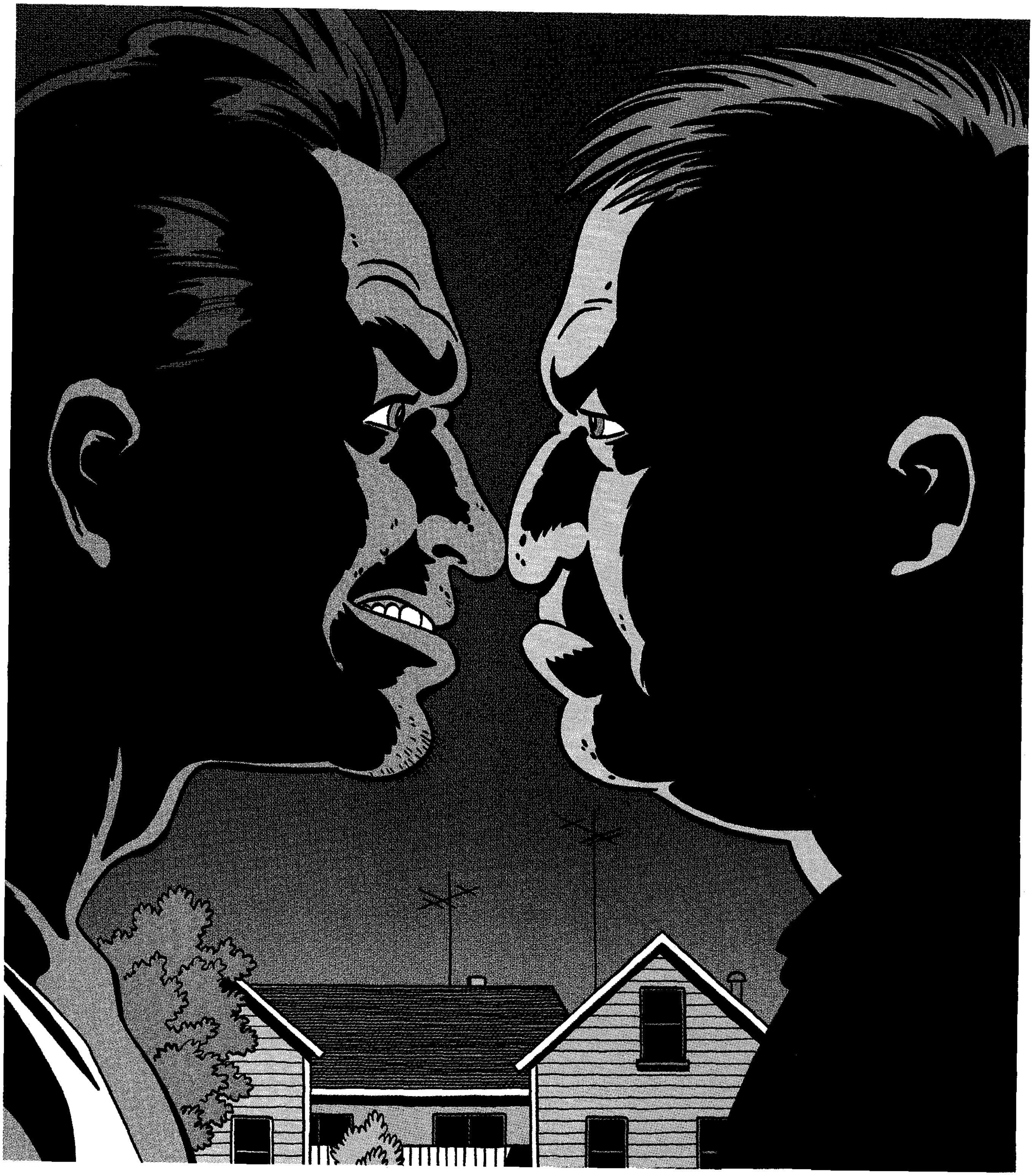
The men of Bravo Company returned to Fort Bragg on January 28th, and soon afterward some two dozen of them piled into vans for the long drive to northern Vermont. They crammed into Helen and Vic's farmhouse and ate prodigiously, sharing photographs and stories. They brought along an oil painting of Bang—rendered by a Baghdad artist from his official Army photograph—as well as a huge framed drawing of paratroopers leaping from an airplane. The Therriens have mounted these on a prominent living-room wall. Helen also has flown twice to Fort Bragg for memorials and other ceremonies; staying connected to Bravo Company, she said, "is part of my healing."

Though soldiers of Bravo Company also attended memorials in both East Windsor and Brigantine for Marc, the Seidens have since let the contact wither. They declined invitations to go to the two ceremonies at Fort Bragg; they have never met Bang's family. "Am I angry?" Gail asked as she wiped down her stove. "Of course I'm angry. I just don't know who at." The same framed drawing of the paratroopers that Helen has on her wall was stacked sideways on the Seidens' living-room floor, and Gail kept in a closet the oil painting of Marc that the unit had commissioned. Jack has arranged the folded flag and Marc's medals on an electric organ in their living room, next to Marc's bar-mitzvah portrait, as a kind of temporary shrine, but the flag and medals look like they'll soon find their way into a closet. I asked if the Seidens, too, had received a condolence letter from President Bush, and Gail said no. "Sure we did," Jack said. "We have it here someplace." ♦

FICTION

ADAMS

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



I never could stomach Adams and then one day he's standing in my kitchen, in his underwear. Facing in the direction of my kids' room! So I wonk him in the back of the head and down he goes. When he stands up, I wonk him again and down he goes. Then I roll him down the stairs into the early-spring muck and am like, If you ever again, I swear to God, I don't even know what to say, you miserable fuck.

Karen got home. I pulled her aside. Upshot was: Keep the doors locked, and if he's home the kids stay inside.

But after dinner I got to thinking: Guy comes in in his shorts and I'm sitting here taking this? This is love? Love for my kids? Because what if? What if we slip up? What if a kid gets out or he gets in? No, no, no, I was thinking, not acceptable.

So I went over and said, Where is he?

To which Lynn said, Upstairs, why?

Up I went and he was standing at the mirror, still in his goddam underwear, only now he had on a shirt, and I wonked him again as he was turning. Down he went and tried to crab out of the room, but I put a foot on his back.

If you ever, I said. If you ever again.

Now we're even, he said. I came in your house and you came in mine.

Only I had pants on, I said, and mini-wonked him in the back of his head.

I am what I am, he said.

Well, that took the cake! Him admitting it! So I wonked him again, as Lynn came in, saying, Hey, Roger, hey. Roger being me. And then he rises up. Which killed me! Him rising up? Against me? And I'm about to wonk him again, but she pushes in there, like intervening. So to wonk him again I had to like shove her back, and unfortunately she slipped, and down she went, and she's sort of lying there, skirt hiked up—and he's mad! Mad! At me! Him in his underwear, facing my kids' room, and he's mad at me? Many a night I've heard assorted wonks and baps from Adams's house, with her gasping, Frank, Jesus, I Am a Woman, You're Hurting Me, the Kids Are Watching, and so on.

JAIME HERNANDEZ

Because that's the kind of guy he is.

So I wonked him again, and when she crawled at me, going, Please, Please, I had to push her back down, not in a mean way but in a like stay-there way, which is when, of course, just my luck, the kids came running in—these Adams kids, I should say, are little thespians, constantly doing musicals in the back yard, etc., etc.—so they're, you know, all dramatic: Mummy, Daddy! And, O.K., that was unfortunate, so I tried to leave, but they were standing there in the doorway, blocking me, like, Duh, we do not know which way to turn, we are stunned. So I shoved my way out, not rough, very gentle—I felt for them, having on more than one occasion heard Adams whaling on them, too—but one did go down, just on one knee, and I helped her up, and she tried to bite me! She did not seem to know what was what, and it hurt, and made me mad, so I went over to Adams, who was just getting up, and gave him this like proxy wonk on top of his head, in exchange for the biting.

Keep your damn, I said. Keep your goddam kids from—

Then I needed some air, so I walked around the block, but still it wasn't sitting right. Because now it begins, you know? Adams over there all pissed off, saying false things about me to those kids, which, due to what they had seen (the wonking) and what they had not seen (him in his underwear, facing my kids' room), they were probably swallowing every mistruth, and I was like, Great, now they hate me, like *I'm* the bad guy in this, and all summer it's going to be pranks, my hose slit and syrup in my gas tank, or all of a sudden our dog has a burn mark on her belly.

So I type up these like handbills, saying, Just So You Know, Your Dad Was Standing Naked in My Kitchen, Facing My Kids' Room. And I tape one inside their screen door so they'll be sure and see it when they go to softball later, then I stuff like nine in their mailbox, and on the rest I cross out "Your Dad" and put in "Frank Adams" and distribute them in mailboxes around the block.

All night it's call after call from the neighbors, saying, you know, Call the cops, Adams needs help, he's a goof, I've always hated him, maybe a few of us should go over there, let us work with you on this, do not lose your cool. That sort of thing. Which was all well and good, but then I go out for a smoke around midnight and what is he looking at, all hateful? Their houses? Don't kid yourself. He is looking at my house, with that smoldering look, and I am like, What are you looking at?

I am what I am, he says.

You fuck, I say, and rush over to wonk him, but he runs inside.

And, as far as cops, my feeling was: What am I supposed to do, wait until he's back in my house, then call the cops and hope he stays facing my kids' room, in his shorts, until they arrive?

No, sorry, that is not my way.

The next day my little guy, Brian, is standing at the back door, with his kite, and I like reach over and pop the door shut, going, Nope, nope, you know very well why not, Champ.

So there's my poor kid, kite in lap all afternoon, watching some dumb art guy on PBS saying, Shading Is One Way We Make Depth, How About Trying It Relevant to This Stump Here?

Then Monday morning I see Adams walking toward his car and again he gives me that smoldering look! Never have I received such a hateful look. And flips me the bird! As if he is the one who is right! So I rush over to wonk him, only he gets in the car and pulls away.

All day that look was in my mind, that look of hate.

And I thought, If that was me, if I had that hate level, what would I do? Well, one thing I would do is hold it in and hold it in and then one night it would overflow and I would sneak into the house of my enemy and stab him and his family in their sleep. Or shoot them. I would. You would have to. It is human nature. I am not blaming anybody.

I thought, I have to be cautious and protect my family or their blood will be on my hands.

So I came home early and went over to Adams's house when I knew nobody was home, and gathered up his rifle from the basement and their steak knives and also the butter knives, which could be sharpened, and also their knife sharpener, and also two letter openers and a heavy paperweight, which, if I was him and had lost all my guns and knives, I would definitely use that to bash in the head of my enemy in his sleep, as well as the heads of his family.

That night I slept better until I woke in a sweat, asking myself what I would

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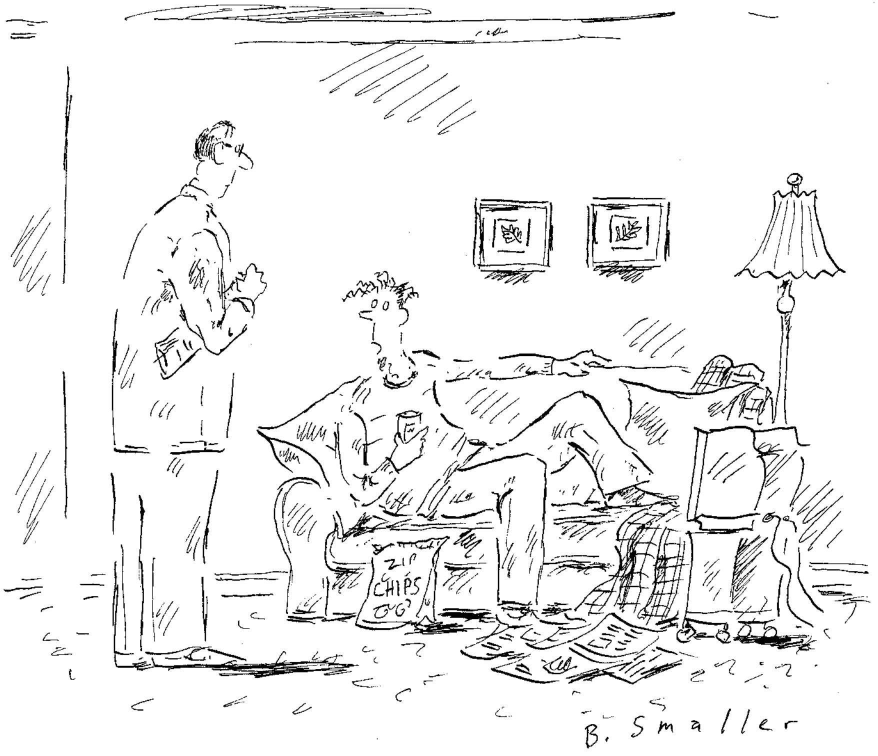
do if someone came in and, after shoving down my wife and one of my kids, stole my guns and knives and knife sharpener as well as my paperweight. And I answered myself: What I would do is look around my house in a frenzy for something else dangerous, such as paint, such as thinner, such as household chemicals, and then either ring the house of my enemy with the toxics and set them on fire or pour some into the pool of my enemy, which would (1) rot the liner and (2) sicken the children of my enemy when they went swimming.

Then I looked in on my sleeping kids and, oh my God, nowhere are there kids as sweet as my kids, and standing there in my pajamas, thinking of Adams standing there in his underwear, then imagining my kids choking and vomiting as they struggled to get out of the pool, I thought, No, no way, I am not living like this.

So, entering through a window I had forced earlier that afternoon, I gathered up all the household chemicals, and, believe me, he had a lot, more than I did, more than he needed, thinner, paint, lye, gas, solvents, etc. I got it all in like nine Hefty bags and was just starting up the stairs with the first bag when here comes the whole damn family, falling upon me, even his kids, whipping me with coat hangers and hitting me with sharp-edged books and spraying hair spray in my eyes, the dog also nipping at me, and rolling down the stairs of their basement I thought, They are trying to kill me. Hitting my head on the concrete floor, I saw stars, and thought, No, really, they are going to kill me, and if they kill me no more little Melanie and me eating from the same popcorn bowl, no more little Brian doing that wrinkled-brow thing we do back and forth when one of us makes a bad joke, never again Karen and me lying side by side afterward, looking out the window, discussing our future plans as those yellow-beaked birds come and go on the power line. And I struggled to my feet, thinking, Forget how I got here, I am here, I must get out of here, I have to live. And I began to wonk and wonk, and once they had fallen back, with Adams and his teen-age boy huddled over the littlest one, who had unfortunately flown relatively far due to a bit of a kick I had given her, I took out my lighter and fired up the bag, the bag of toxics, and made for the light at the top of the stairs, where I knew the door was, and the night was, and my freedom, and my home. ◆



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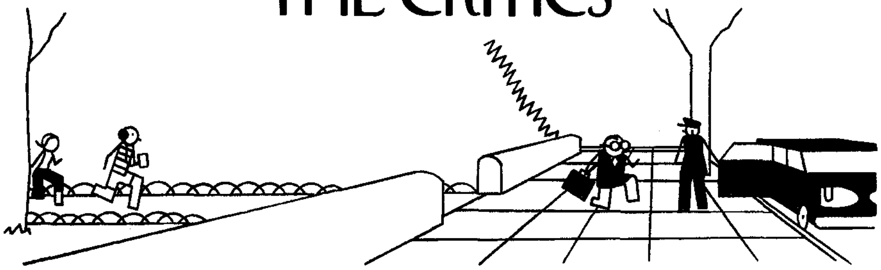


A CRITIC AT LARGE

NANOOK AND ME

"Fahrenheit 9/11" and the documentary tradition.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Whatever you think of Michael Moore's immensely satisfying movie about the awful Bush Administration and its destructive policies—and reasonable people can disagree, of course—one thing that cannot be said about "Fahrenheit 9/11" is that it is an outlaw from the documentary tradition. "The documentary tradition" sounds like a grand phrase for a genre that includes everything from "Nanook of the North" to "Girls Gone Wild." There's no doubt that it's an eclectic form. The "Documentary" section shelves Michael Moore next to National Geographic, movies about bad Presidents next to movies about butterflies, bodybuilders, and Eskimos. These movies do have one thing in common, though: they show you what was not intended for you to see. The essential documentary impulse is the impulse to catch life off camera, to film what was not planned to happen, or what would have happened whether someone was there to film it or not. That's why people make documentaries, and why people go to see them. It's a genre founded on a paradox.

The term is as old as the cinema. *Documentaire* was one of the names that early filmmakers, back when many of the prominent ones were French, gave to movies of ordinary life, exotic places, and current events. The word suggests observational neutrality, a documentation, an unretouched record of what's real; and if that was the promise it was betrayed almost from the start. The film and television historian Erik Barnouw, in his excellent survey of the documentary, lists a dozen cases from the early years where material was simply faked. Finding that on film Teddy Roosevelt's charge up San Juan Hill looked more like a hike on a hot day, producers at Vitagraph reënacted the battle of Santiago Bay in miniature on a tabletop and added it to what they had shot in Cuba. The British producer James Williamson filmed the Boer War on a golf course. Thomas Edison made a documentary of the Russo-Japanese War on Long Island. Biograph exhibited a movie called "The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius" made nowhere near Mt. Vesuvius. The Danish mogul Ole Olsen produced a safari documentary by buying a couple of aging lions from the Copenhagen zoo, moving them to an island, and, inter-cutting stock jungle footage, filming them being killed by hired "hunters." Audiences didn't seem to mind.

Those early documentarians were not journalists. They were, by cinematic standards, scarcely even filmmakers. They were businessmen. The first man to charge admission to a movie, the French industrialist Louis Lumière, thought that the cinema was a novelty without a future. He got out of the production business, at which he had been fantastically successful, after two years. That was in 1897. Early documentaries therefore had politics the way that tabloids have politics: they flattered prejudice. They were indistinguishable from propaganda. They were also, like the dramatic films of the time, short. It was after the feature-length film became standard that the documentary acquired its distinctive political cast and became a medium of progressivism.

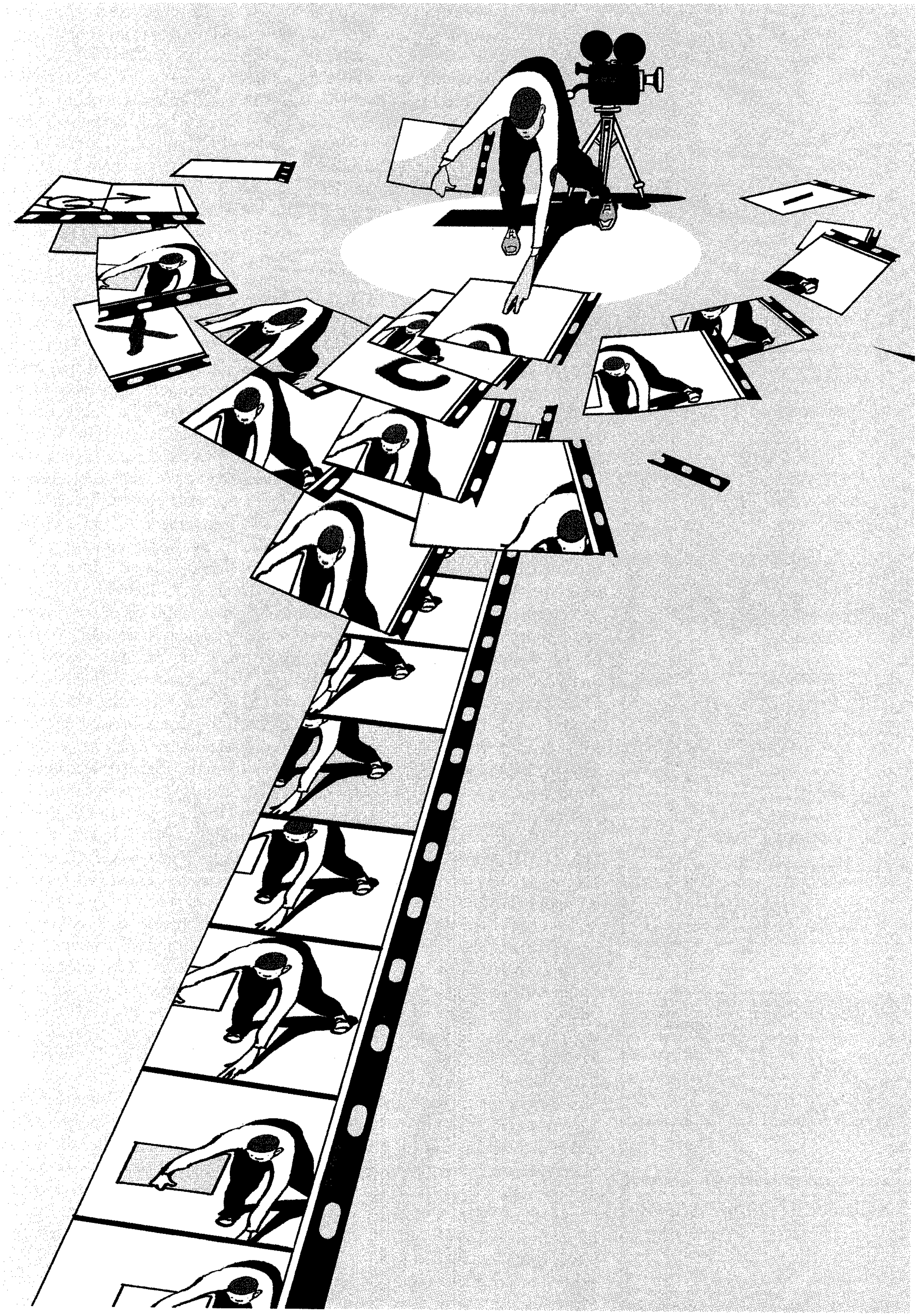
It's not surprising that documentary-makers have usually worked in a spirit of advocacy. They are people sufficiently committed to a point of view to go to the trouble of obtaining expensive equipment, carting it into the field, shooting miles of film under often unpleasant or dangerous conditions, and spending months or years splicing the results into a coherent movie. It's easier to write an editorial. It's easier, even, to write a book. People who make documentaries don't make them because they believe that "reasonable people can disagree," or that there are two sides to every question. They believe that there are, at most, one and a half sides—a right side and a side that, despite possibly having some redeeming aspects, is, on balance, wrong. They make movies because they are passionate about their subjects and they want to arouse passion in others, many others.

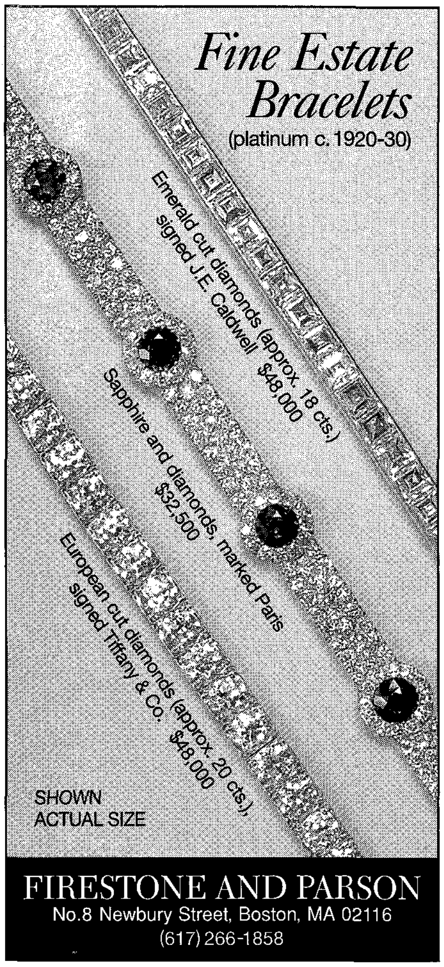
These passions may tend to be progressive rather than conservative because progressives are more likely to be the sort of people who feel good about expressing their activism in an artistic medium that requires hardship and teamwork, and that results in a product that has little chance of making anyone rich. It may also have something to do with the nature of documentary itself. A preference for the off-camera is a preference for ordinary life—"the drama of the doorstep," the legendary Scottish producer John Grierson called it. Ordinary people don't lose their dignity when they're caught off camera, because they're always off camera. It's on camera, in fact, where most people appear awkward and undignified. But people who are normally seen only on a stage—the powerful and the celebrated—lose a little dignity and authority when they're shown barking at their secretaries or putting saliva on their combs. The documentary has a built-in bias against officialdom.

The man who made the documentary into an art form was an American, Rob-

The notion of the documentarian as a fly on the wall, just recording life as it happens, was born in the nineteen-fifties.

ISTVAN BANYAI

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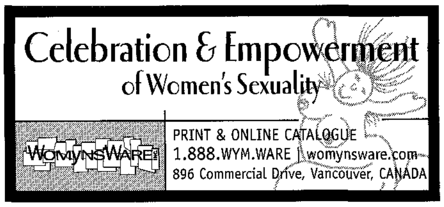
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ert Flaherty. He began shooting film of the Inuit in northern Canada in 1914, but his famous first movie, "Nanook of the North," did not come out until 1922. It was financed by one French company, Revillon Frères (a fur business), and distributed by another, Pathé, after Paramount and four other studios had turned it down. It was a worldwide hit; in Germany, an ice-cream sandwich was named after the protagonist—a Nanuk. Paramount called back. It ended up producing Flaherty's next movie, "Moana," which he made in Samoa and which came out in 1926.

In *vérité* terms, "Nanook" is largely a fake. "What I want to show is the former majesty and character of these people, while it is still possible—before the white man has destroyed not only their character, but the people as well," Flaherty wrote in an unpublished memoir. "Former" is the key word. Flaherty arranged, for example, to film a walrus hunt in order to show how indigenous people once gathered food. The Inuit had long since stopped walrus-hunting, and they ended up struggling to drag a harpooned walrus out of the Arctic surf and begging Flaherty to shoot it with his rifle. Flaherty pretended not to hear them and kept filming. Later on, Nanook and his family are shown building an igloo out in the wilderness. It was too dark inside the igloo to film, so a special igloo—in other words, a set—was constructed with one wall removed, and the family was filmed, in daylight, pretending to go to bed. When a shot didn't work, Flaherty asked his subjects to repeat what they were doing until he was satisfied.

"Nanook" owed its popularity to Flaherty's decision to tell the story of a family rather than try to document a whole community. The opening scene, in which Nanook's large family adorably crawls, one by one, out of an impossibly tiny kayak, is the perfect audience hook. Flaherty used the same strategy in later films, but he often cast the members of his screen "family" himself. And, as he had with the walrus hunt, he persuaded his subjects to reënact abandoned traditions. In Samoa, it was the practice of tattooing; in "Man of Aran," made in the Aran Islands, off Ireland, in 1934, it was a shark hunt. He had to bring in an expert to teach the locals how to do it. Flaherty staged the unstaged.

Flaherty inspired many filmmakers. Some made movies in the anthropological spirit of "Nanook" and "Moana," and some, like Grierson, turned to modern life, but with similar ennobling intentions. Grierson's only directorial effort, made in 1929, is a piece of industrial poetry called "Drifters," about North Sea herring fishermen. "Fishermen still have their homes in the old-time villages—but they go down, for each season, to the labour of a modern industry," reads a typical intertitle, and this strikes the exact progressive note: traditional folkways encountering the global economy in the figure of the heroic worker. This is the spirit of a lot of the movies that Grierson went on to produce as the head of the Empire Marketing Film Unit, in Britain, and, later, of the National Film Board of Canada. Those movies don't represent the purest progressivism in the documentary tradition, though. That distinction belongs to the brilliant Soviet documentaries of Dziga Vertov—movies with titles like "Stride, Soviet!," "One Sixth of the World," and "Three Songs of Lenin."

The toxic antibody in the tradition, of course, is Leni Riefenstahl, who died last year, at the age of a hundred and one. "Triumph of the Will," filmed at the 1934 Nazi Party rally, was released in 1935. In most respects, it represents a complete inversion of what the documentary since Flaherty had been all about. It doesn't try to speak truth to power; it tries to speak the truth *of* power. Riefenstahl's camera is in love with the stage. There is no sense of a reality beyond the frame. There isn't even any sense of a frame, outside which something else might exist. Still, for everyone who watches it today, "Triumph of the Will" has the essential documentary fascination: you feel that you are seeing things you were not intended to see. It is a weird case of propaganda, over time, turning into something like an exposé.

The notion of the documentary as a plotless, commentary-less, *vérité*-style record of life as it is—the notion of the documentarian as a fly on the wall—was born in the nineteen-fifties. Lighter and more mobile cameras were less obtrusive, more suited to capturing subjects "off camera." High-speed film opened up interior spaces. But the fresh variable was sound. In the late nineteen-

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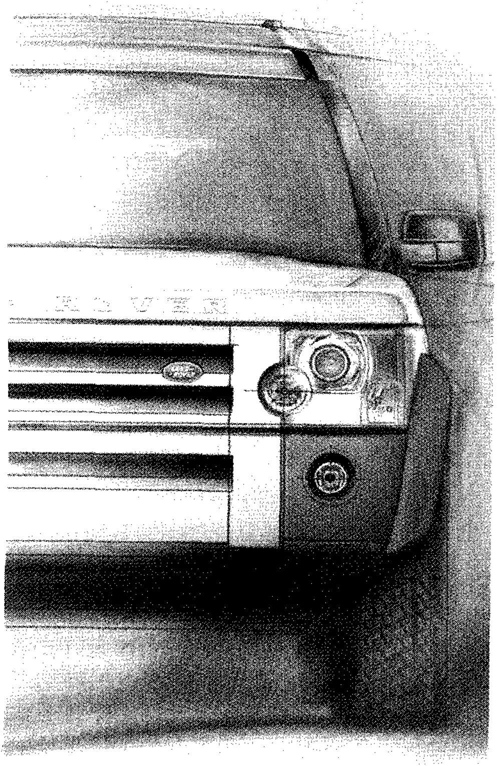

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fifties, the American filmmaker Robert Drew helped to perfect synchronized sound shooting. He also understood the key to creating the kind of documentary that the new equipment made possible: access. You get in the door, and then you just hang around until people forget you're there.

In Britain, this method was associated with a movement known as Free Cinema; in the United States, it was called "direct cinema." Drew went on to make a series of remarkable inside-look documentaries, including "Primary," about the 1960 Wisconsin primary, and "Crisis," about the forced integration of the University of Alabama, in 1963—two of the best records of the Kennedys on the job. His group, Drew Associates, gave a start to filmmakers like D. A. Pennebaker and Albert and David Maysles.

The Mozart of the form is Frederick Wiseman. His first documentary, "Titicut Follies," of 1967, an exposé about the Bridgewater State Hospital, in Massachusetts, shows scenes that do not require comment—and, of course, there is no comment in a Wiseman film. Wiseman must have felt that even the title was an editorial intrusion (it refers to a song-and-dance revue performed by some of the inmates), for his subsequent titles are neutral to the point of petulance: "High School," "Hospital," "Juvenile Court," and so on. Wiseman does not operate the camera when he films; he operates the sound system, and the sound is the bravura element. The movies do not just show what was not intended for you to see; they let you listen to what was not intended for you to hear. Wiseman is a voyeur of the ear.

Not surprisingly in the case of a filmmaker who goes to such lengths to suppress editorializing, editorializing is the central issue in Wiseman's work. His own position is subtle. He refers to his movies as "reality fictions," and although he edits in extremely long takes, which give an impression of inclusiveness, he insists that the results correspond to nothing in real life. "All the material is manipulated so that the final film is totally fictional in form although it is based on real events," he has said. There is (as many people have guessed, anyway) a theme in Wiseman's work: it is about dehumanization, about what happens to individuals when they get caught in a

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system. But is Wiseman showing you this, or is he telling you this? Part of the experience of watching his movies—not just "Titicut Follies," where the point is blunt enough, but, for example, "The Store," about the Neiman-Marcus department store in Dallas, which demands a lot of viewer input—is asking yourself: Why these scenes, where nothing much seems to be happening, and not other scenes, where something might actually be happening? And then: What about those other scenes? Could they open onto a different side of the story? Wiseman's point, in talking about his movies as fictions, seems to be that these are questions that people always *should* be asking. There may be a neutral style, but there is no neutrality.

The catch in Wiseman's approach, as in almost every documentary, is that there is one exception to the implicit claim that the camera is showing you everything, and that is the camera. As night begins to fall, Nanook and his family are caught in a blizzard, far from their igloo. We are watching all this, so obviously there is at least one other person present, Flaherty. In fact, Flaherty often shot alone, and he was willing to suffer the privations of his subjects. But, as in the adventure with the walrus, there is something fundamentally bogus about what we are seeing. If the Inuit (as the intertitles explain) are driven to hunting walrus from sheer hunger, can't the man with the movie camera (and the rifle) help them out? It is the paradox of "off camera."

One way to handle this is to put the filmmaker inside the frame, as Marcel Ophuls did in "The Sorrow and the Pity," on the Occupation in France, and Claude Lanzmann did, to a much greater extent, in "Shoah." The filmmaker is seen; his voice is heard. "Getting the story" is part of the story. In those films, though, what is "off camera" is not the interview subjects, who are presented in relatively formal settings, but the facts of collaboration and extermination—things that the collaborators and the exterminators had hoped no one would ever see again.

A more radical solution is not to enter the frame but to break it. Errol Morris opens "The Fog of War," his recent documentary on Robert McNamara, with a scene in which McNamara is explain-

BRIEFLY NOTED

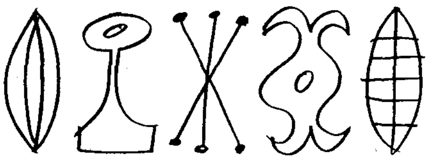
The Great Outdoors

Wolves and Honey, *by Susan Brind Morrow (Houghton Mifflin; $18.95).* The Finger Lakes region of western New York is remote from much of the state, and, unlike the Hamptons, the Catskills, and the Adirondacks, was never really settled by summer people. It is nevertheless a beautiful and somewhat mysterious part of America—with long, clean lakes, hidden valleys, and towns bearing Greek names like Hector and Ithaca—and was the birthplace of Mormonism, spiritualism, and the American women's-suffrage movement. Morrow grew up in Geneva, at the north end of Seneca Lake (where F. Scott Fitzgerald's doomed Dick Diver ended up). Her short, affecting book is partly a memoir recalling the habits of bees, the return of wolves, and "a life spun together through layers of sense impressions," and also a meditation on the outdoors that evokes "the smell of damp earth, the sweetness of maples and pines . . . as though it were freedom itself."

Stargazing, *by Peter Hill (Canongate; $24).* In 1973, Hill, a hippie art student from Glasgow, anticipated that his stint as a summer lighthouse-keeper off the west coast of Scotland would be a time for writing haiku and painting seascapes. Real duty, he learned, is more like living inside a working clock—keeping watch by a relentless schedule, with sleep parcelled into shifts of a few hours and conversations carried on in fifteen-second intervals between foghorn blasts. His narrative gives voice to the old-salt Scotsmen who tend the lights, as they recount murderous legends or boil over while watching the Watergate hearings. Hill's final posting proves the most daunting—a lighthouse on a narrow strip of lava in the Outer Hebrides that is reachable only by helicopter. High seas sometimes submerge the entire island, and Hill's last night there is complicated by the arrival of half a million migrating birds, illuminated by the beacon and pecking at the windows.

A Little History of British Gardening, *by Jenny Uglow (North Point; $35).* Uglow's brisk history starts with Roman attempts to adapt to the English climate (a summer divan found in one ruin is "a mark of real optimism") and whisks us through a panorama of monastery herb gardens, medieval walled gardens, Tudor knots, and Restoration parterres. She's alert to the way that fashion gradually edged out mere utility, as she explains the landscaping craze of the eighteenth century, the flower-bed craze of the Victorians, and the current vogue for vegetables grown for decorative effect. Leavening the welter of fact with personal asides, she relishes the dottier manifestations of horticultural single-mindedness, like Francis Carew's method of providing Elizabeth I with out-of-season cherries (a damp canvas cover to keep the tree cool in summer), and John Evelyn's pleasingly unworkable plan to counter seventeenth-century London pollution by surrounding the capital with an enormous border of flowers.

Gardens of Persia, *by Penelope Hobhouse (Kales; $49.95).* The word "paradise" comes from the ancient Persian word for an enclosed garden, and the art of landscaping is arguably Iran's great cultural legacy; *qanats*, underground ducts bringing melted snow from the mountains, have artificially irrigated the arid plateau of Iran for the past two and a half millennia. Hobhouse, a veteran garden historian and designer, elegantly explains the continuity of the aesthetic ideas that govern Persian gardens, with their rills of water and tree-lined alleys underplanted with roses and violets. Her account, accompanied by Jerry Harpur's spectacular photography, spans more than two thousand years of design, leading us from the remnants of Cyrus the Great's capital, Pasargadae, to Persian-influenced gardens as far afield as Quebec.



ing, “off camera,” what he intends to say once the interview starts. This is more than an “it’s only a movie” disclaimer—as though anyone might doubt that it is. It’s a reminder of who is controlling the narrative. It’s consistent with Morris’s tendency to photograph McNamara in a way that makes him look off balance and dishevelled, a little too hot for the camera.

Mainstream journalists generally admired “The Fog of War”; they generally despise “Fahrenheit 9/11.” What they complain about (politics aside) is manipulation, that the logic of the movie is, If it looks bad, it probably is bad. Members of the Bush family palling around with wealthy Saudis looks bad; deputy defense secretaries licking their combs looks bad; politicians in “live-feed” shots before they go on the air look bad. So do children who have been wounded (we are not told how), names blacked out on official documents (we don’t know by whom), John Ashcroft singing his own composition “Let the Eagle Soar” (well, that is pretty bad). The criticism is completely correct: this *is* the logic of the movie, by and large. It’s the logic of the visual. “We don’t know the source for what we’re seeing,” people have complained. They’re right. Movies do not have footnotes.

Some of the tricks Moore has been attacked for using—the slow-motion replay of live feed of President Bush before delivering a televised address, for example—are used by Morris, too. Morris runs slow-motion footage of Curtis LeMay and Lyndon Johnson that makes them look just as rabbity and unstable as Moore makes Bush look. Moore introduces Bush Administration characters with shots of them being made up for television—they fake the way they look, so we can’t believe what they say. Morris shows McNamara checking sound levels before he starts speaking on camera. It is all standard documentary demystifying, the backstage glimpse of people getting dressed to impress. In McNamara’s case, the treatment actually makes him more credible, because we feel we are seeing him in the raw. And where’s the shock value, anyway? Television watchers have become so accustomed to the comedy of the outtake that it’s amazing the technique has any bite left at all.

Moore’s own presence in “Fahrenheit 9/11”—he does the voice-over, he gives himself a lot of screen time, he does his political performance-art bits, like buttonholing congressmen and encouraging them to have their kids enlist—has annoyed even viewers disposed to appreciate his bias. He’s an obnoxious embarrassment, they feel, and his case would be stronger if he stayed offscreen. But if Moore stayed offscreen his movie’s tendentiousness would be a lot more sinister. It’s hard to evaluate something when you can’t discount for perspective. Moore does not exactly conceal his. He’s a populist ideologue who boils everything down to a single article of belief: the rich screw the poor. Most people who see “Fahrenheit 9/11” already know the degree to which they accept this as an explanation for everything, and they adjust their reception of the movie accordingly.

Why do people who do not credit Michael Moore with much political sophistication like his movie anyway? One common reaction to “Fahrenheit 9/11” is that it shows you things that have never been seen before—the “Pet Goat” and “Now watch this drive” clips, scenes of carnage and brutality in Iraq, Saudi-schmoozing, Ashcroft singing, Al Gore being forced to reject repeated petitions by black representatives to contest the official counting of the electoral-college votes in the 2000 election. It may be that most of these things were shown somewhere, but the movie is designed to make audiences feel that they have never been seen, or that, having been seen, they have been deliberately suppressed. *Someone doesn’t want us to see this:* it’s the pure documentary impulse, and it works.

Liberals have been relatively forgiving of the movie in part out of sheer exhaustion from the cravenness of the mainstream media, which investigated Whitewater with far greater zeal than it did the claim that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and the shameless cheerleading of the right-wing media. Robert Greenwald’s “Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism,” a movie that has yet to tempt a distributor but has been exhibited in special screenings, and that circulates, samizdat style, on videotape and DVD, is a forceful reminder of how vicious the

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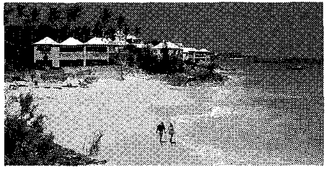

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cheerleading is. "Outfoxed" ought to be a redundant exercise. The right-wing bias of Fox News, whose laughable motto is "Fair and Balanced," is not something that ought to require a documentary to uncover. But where is the mainstream media? The answer is that the mainstream media is a place where Tucker Carlson is identified as a "political analyst." Reporting on television is now accompanied by so much partisan yapping disguised as analysis, and there is such a panic to get anything on the air that comes over the transom regardless of the source (like pictures of John Kerry in a silly hat), that the other networks have to feel uncomfortable about accusing anyone else of confusing news with opinion. "Outfoxed" suggests, in fact, that competing news organizations, like CNN, having seen that flag-waving attracts viewers, are starting to imitate Fox.

Cinematically, "Outfoxed" is a straightforward film, consisting mostly of clips and talking heads. Greenwald is reported to have assembled an enormous archive of Fox News videotapes, and the movie reveals, by montage, telling patterns of bias and innuendo. He also managed to score some damning memos, sent to the Fox News organization by a senior vice-president for news named John Moody, which explain what the story of the day will be and how reporters and announcers are expected to spin it. There may be a few viewers out there who continue to confuse Bill O'Reilly with Eric Sevareid. "Outfoxed" will disabuse them.

Greenwald has also produced two documentaries on the Bush Administration, "Unprecedented," about the 2000 election, and "Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War"—films that went straight to DVD. According to an article in the *Times Magazine* by Robert Boynton, "Outfoxed" was partly funded by MoveOn and the Center for American Progress, liberal groups, and the movie ends, weakly, with a call for the people to rise up and protest (shots of tiny groups of picketers with hand-lettered signs) and with similar exhortations from the usual exhorters. There are no interviews with current Fox employees, or with anyone else who might offer a defense of the network or challenge some of the movie's assertions. "Outfoxed" is not a work of reporting; it is a brief for the prosecution, most of it supported by the juxtaposition of very short clips from Fox News broadcasts. It's totally manipulative. Mainstream journalists will love it anyway.

What's wrong with "Fahrenheit 9/11" isn't the method. It's the thesis. Moore's big idea is that the war in Iraq wasn't about running the world; it was about money. This seems exactly backward. It's possible that if going to war in Iraq were bad for Halliburton the Bush Administration would have hesitated, but it did not go to war in Iraq because the war would be good for Halliburton. It went to war because of an idea about America's world-historical mission. It was an idea that a lot of people who were not conservative Republicans signed on to with enthusiasm and with reasons more articulate than any Bush himself is capable of uttering. The war and the occupation have gone sour, but although you don't hear much about the idea anymore, it's not at all obvious that it has been abandoned. The intellectual investment in the Iraq war is much scarier than the financial involvement. Moore's movie never treats it.

One of the first movies shown to a public was called "The Arrival of a Train." A movie camera had been placed at the edge of the platform, and the train was filmed pulling into the station. It was one of Lumière's most popular shorts. The story grew up that audiences screamed and tried to get out of the way when they saw the image of the approaching train, and this anecdote became a kind of touchstone in meditations on the power of the cinematic. But recent scholarship suggests that the story is baseless. Audiences did not think that the train on the screen was going to run them over. They knew what was happening: they were watching a movie. Movies are a powerful means of expression, but watching one is not the equivalent of being hit over the head with a brick. You can still think. If you don't, it's not the filmmaker's fault. You can withhold your assent to a lot of what Michael Moore implies about George Bush and his brutish, arrogant, reactionary Administration, and still take pleasure in the way he makes them look bad. You can even think that the reason they look bad is that they *are* bad. It's only a movie. ♦

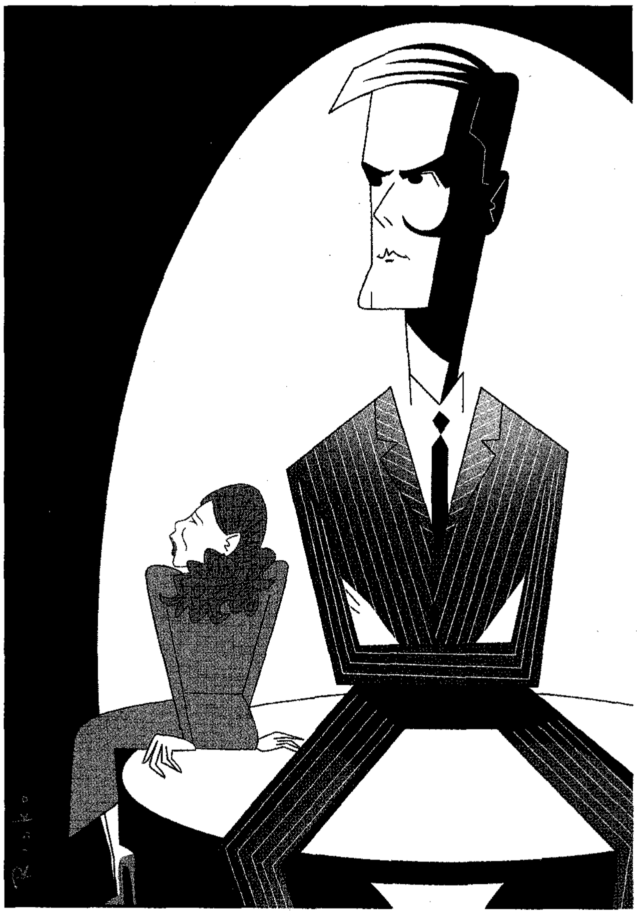
THE THEATRE

TALKERS AND TOGAS

Revivals by Arthur Miller and Nathan Lane.

BY HILTON ALS

"After the Fall" (a Roundabout production at the American Airlines Theatre) is Arthur Miller's Eugene O'Neill moment—not the O'Neill of the lesser plays, "Dynamo," "The Rope," and so on, but the turgid, self-consciously grand O'Neill of "Strange Interlude," with a little of "Mourning Becomes Electra" 's fraught familial pull thrown in for good measure. The play was regarded as something of an event when it premièred, in 1964. Not only was it directed by Elia Kazan but Jason Robards played the lead. "After the Fall" was also Miller's theatrical comeback after an absence of nine years, opening three years after the end of his troubled marriage to Marilyn Monroe and two years after her spectacular flame-out and death. It marked a departure for Miller. A sprawling, less conventionally structured work than the plays that had come before it—"All My Sons," "Death of a Salesman," "The Crucible"—"After the Fall," most of which is set "in the mind, thought, and memory" of its protagonist, Quentin, stretched Miller's technical and intellectual boundaries. He was searching for a new form to fit the new developments of his mind. Not everything about it was new, of course. Miller has always been a moralist of sorts, never more at ease than when contemplating domestic dilemmas that resonate with global significance. Urban, Jewish, and leftist, his best writing examines the work of the individual conscience when pitted against the uniform thinking of the mob. In "After the Fall," however, the mob is composed almost entirely of women. And Quentin is almost pure conscience—the problem being that he lacks the flesh and bone to make an audience identify with his joy or pain.



Jessica Hecht and Peter Krause reëngage in "After the Fall."

ROBERT RISKO

The time is 1962; the place, the transit lounge of the old Idlewild Airport. The seats, walls, and floor, as rendered by the gifted set designer, Richard Hoover, are almost all the same shade of gray; against this neutral tone, the characters' hair, makeup, and clothes pop out like nasty symbols in a dream. Miller's set direction reads, "Except for one chair there is no furniture in the conventional sense; there are no walls or substantial boundaries. . . . The mind has no color but its memories are brilliant against the grayness of its landscape." It takes a director with exceptional interpretive skills to render this description into something that an audience can both see and believe, and Michael Mayer is a great director. Not only does he give the set form, he gives the play form, too. (He apparently chopped out a significant portion of the text, making the running time at the American Airlines about two hours and thirty minutes.)

As the play begins, Quentin (Peter Krause), a lawyer, enters the lounge in a hurry. He's there to pick up Holga (Vivienne Benesch), a German archeologist whom he met abroad a few months before and who is on her way to a conference at Columbia University. "I never thought it could happen again," Quentin says to the audience—the lion's share of his comments are addressed to the house—with a sad, wistful smile. He has been married and divorced twice: first to the dry, witty Louise (the perfectly cast Jessica Hecht), and then to Maggie (Carla Gugino, making a phenomenal Broadway début). Now he has a third chance at happiness. But first he must explore, in emotional flashback, the mistakes of the past. Already Mayer has substantially improved the text, by working with Miller to pare away at Quentin's opening speech. Quentin addresses an absent "Listener," whom we assume is God, or some other patient deity—he has to be patient, because Quentin just talks and talks. By way of introducing us to his "tortured" consciousness, for example, he says (in a passage that remains intact in the current production):

> You know, more and more I think that for many years I looked at life like a case at law, a series of proofs. When you're young you prove how brave you are, or smart; then, what a good lover; then a good father; finally, how wise, or powerful, or what-the-hell-ever. But underlying it all, I see now, there was a presumption. That I was moving on an upward path toward some elevation, where—God knows what—I would be justified, or even condemned—a verdict anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day—and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that re-

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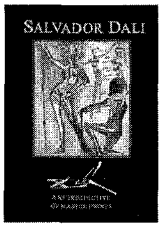

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mained was this endless argument with oneself—this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench. Which, of course, is another way of saying—despair.

Mayer knows that there's only so much of this stuff that real live spectators can take. And, by cutting the play down, he has given it a shape that is closer to that of "Death of a Salesman"—in which Willy Loman's soliloquies are part of the fabric of the play, without becoming the play itself. Unfortunately, even with the cuts, Krause just isn't up to the task of making this academic language live. A remarkably thin actor, he's a blank sheet of paper that resists emotion and ideas; he is also physically smug, a frat boy who knows that the world is his oyster. This approach works perfectly well for Krause's repugnantly solipsistic character on the television series "Six Feet Under." But in a play of this magnitude Krause is lost, and he relies far too heavily on what he's been rewarded for in the past: his slightly funky white-boy charisma.

As a result, the play doesn't really hold our interest until Maggie, a singer with an addiction to pills and alcohol, takes the stage. Maggie (presumably based on Marilyn Monroe) is, it seems, a red-haired, manipulative sex doll, who, like all the women in Quentin's life, has a heart of gold, if only he could mine it. Most of Miller's female characters seem to be part of the same dichotomy: they are either interesting screechers—think of the female hysterics in "The Crucible"—or not so interesting noble wives and mothers. In any case, Gugino's Maggie is a revelation. In the course of her career—she has appeared in a number of independent films, as well as in the now defunct television series "Karen Sisco"—Gugino has always brought a special interior reality to whatever venture she's found herself lumbered with. Here, with her heart-shaped face, red lips, and perpetually pleading expression, she makes you want simultaneously to turn away from Maggie and to embrace her. When, near the end of the play, Maggie becomes uglier and uglier in her behavior toward Quentin, you're simply embarrassed for Krause—Gugino is working on an entirely different level.

Miller reserves his best or, rather, most humorous writing for Maggie,

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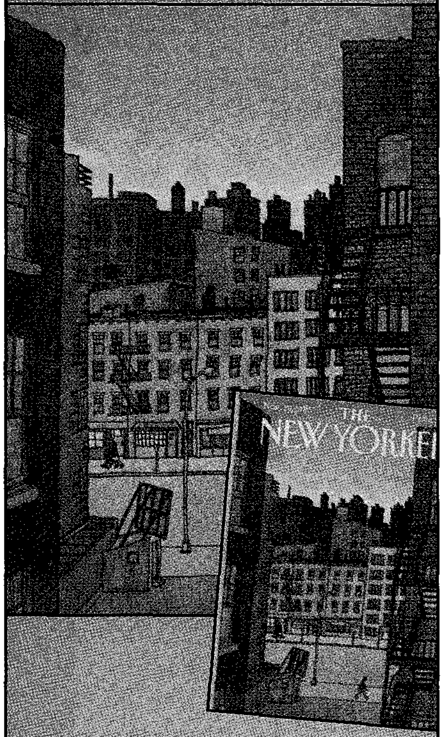

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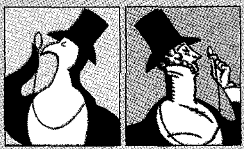

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whom Quentin—thank God—cannot explain away. In one especially ghastly and hilarious scene, she attacks Quentin's hard-won masculinity:

> MAGGIE: Why you wear those pants? I told you the seat is tight.
>
> QUENTIN: Well, they made them too tight, but I can take a walk in them.
>
> MAGGIE: Fags wear pants like that; I told you. They attract each other with their asses.
>
> QUENTIN: You calling me a fag now?
>
> MAGGIE: Just I've known fags and some of them didn't even know themselves that they were. . . . And I didn't know if you knew about that.

Gugino plays this moment for all it's worth, which is a great deal, in her hands. She, along with Mayer, makes "After the Fall" worth revisiting—like a dark garden filled with the mesmerizing scent of decay and hope.

If you like your Aristophanes by way of overproduced Burt Bacharach-style slickness, there is much to recommend "The Frogs" (part of the Lincoln Center Festival, at the Vivian Beaumont). Freely adapted, from the 405 B.C. comedy, by Burt Shevelove, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, the show was originally produced in 1974 at the Yale School of Drama, with a cast that included a number of students then enrolled in the graduate division, among them Meryl Streep, Sigourney Weaver, and Christopher Durang. In that production, the highlight was the university swimming pool, where the action took place. Here, the main event is Nathan Lane, who stars as Dionysos, and who has also, as a program note informs us, "even more freely adapted" Shevelove's original script, expanding it from one hour to two and a half. It's fairly easy to see that Lane has rewritten the script to match his astonishing ego. A self-consciously adorable one-man band in a toga, he goes out of his way to upstage all the other performers, not to mention the text itself. Suffice it to say that the cloying sentiment at the heart of Lane's wind-up-puppy style of acting—if one can call it that—infects everything here, including Susan Stroman's so-so direction and choreography.

Aristophanes' "The Frogs" was written at a time of great political duress. The Athenians had been at war with Sparta, Sicily, and other countries for some twenty-five years, and the leaders of Athens were leading badly. (You get the picture: "The Frogs" can serve as a mirror for the mess in which our current foreign policy has landed us.) The play's protagonist, Dionysos, the god of theatre, is determined to find the great dramatic voice to express the truth of his times, even if it means making a journey to Hades—along with his slave, Xanthias (Roger Bart)—to bring him back. In the underworld, in Aristophanes' play, Dionysos witnesses a dialogue between Euripides and Aeschylus—the "philosophical" and "political" voices of their era, respectively. The subject of the debate: Whose art is more worthy? In Shevelove and Lane's version, the theatrical titans who engage in this war of words are George Bernard Shaw (Daniel Davis) and William Shakespeare (Michael Siberry)—intellect versus feeling. Of course, Shakespeare wins the debate, but any verbal depth and insight in the argument are lost in the predictable pyrotechnics of babes and boobs. Sondheim has written a lovely new ballad for the current production, "Ariadne" (an ode to Dionysos' late wife), which Lane manages to pull off with a minimum of fuss. Still, it's difficult to hear Sondheim in the score—the songs that date from 1974 are transitional works by a composer who was then somewhere between "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" and "Pacific Overtures."

The afternoon I saw "The Frogs," the audience loved it; the theatre was full, which probably means that the show will be a hit, despite itself. Admittedly, I have some prejudice against theatrical fables—it is difficult enough to explore the truth of a character's inner life and motivations onstage without a surfeit of visual and aural metaphor. And that surfeit is precisely what Stroman and Lane serve up in this production. At no time is the mind or the eye given a chance to rest and thus reflect on who any of the characters are or want to be, and the show, sadly, ends up feeling more like a farce than a fable. With high kicks. ♦

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Headline in the Asheville (N.C.) Citizen-Times.

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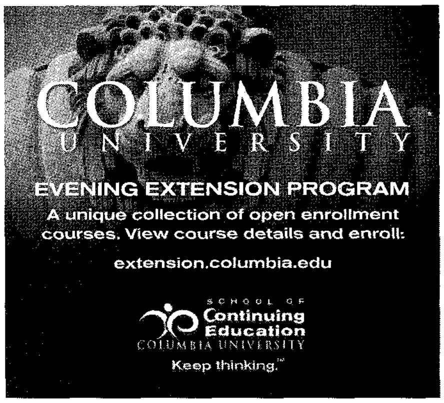
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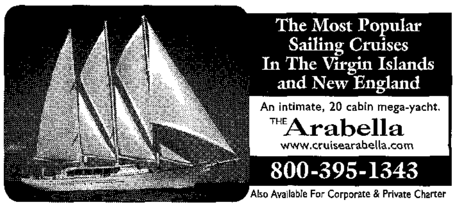
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POP MUSIC

MOTHER TONGUE

The Streets and Dizzee Rascal break free of American hip-hop.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Despite having invented the English language and those clever TV shows, Britain hasn't withstood our cultural colonization any better than the rest of the world. In the eighties and nineties, British m.c.s generally sounded like variants of their American counterparts. Having an adorable accent didn't disguise the fact that you'd borrowed your style from Rakim, or Run-DMC, or Nas. The debt is finally being erased. The music coming out of Birmingham and London today sounds nothing like American hip-hop. You can't even call it hip-hop—though it wouldn't exist without hip-hop.

Two very different ambassadors of this moment are Mike Skinner, a.k.a. the Streets, a twenty-five-year-old white man from Birmingham who specializes in shaggy-dog stories, and Dylan Mills, a.k.a. Dizzee Rascal, a nineteen-year-old black man from East London who uses his remarkable voice to punch holes in the air. Mills won the corporate-sponsored Mercury Prize last year for his album "Boy in Da Corner," and Skinner's new record, "A Grand Don't Come for Free," is favored for the same prize this year. Earlier in the summer, the two appeared together here, at Irving Plaza.

The club filled early—Skinner and Mills have sturdy followings—and Mills appeared first, performing with a hype man (someone who exhorts the crowd and sings along with key lines) and a disk jockey. Wearing a Yankees cap, Mills was calm and businesslike. He is small of stature but moves with equilibrium and carefully parcelled-out effort, as if he'd known since kindergarten that people are watching him. He raps over music that he produces himself; the consensus term for this genre is "grime," though the sounds are paradoxically clean in the way that only digital media are clean. Some grime tracks sound like buzzers rasping inside an oil barrel; others seem to have been made from cell-phone ring tones. The music is synthetic and hits hard, almost to the point of punishment. What strikes an American ear is the rhythm. Even the most aggressive American hip-hop is indebted to the African-American musical tradition of emphasized downbeats and swing. These tendencies are human-friendly even when the lyrics aren't. Grime shares neither this lineage nor these concerns. Its roots are in the fast and furious fusion of Jamaican dance hall and English rave music called drum and bass, and another, lighter dance music called garage. (No relation to garage rock.) If you're bracing for a test, there are two major points: grime's first motherland is likely Jamaica or England, rather than America; and grime favors fast, anxious tempos that rarely show up in American hip-hop. Grime smacks and bullies whatever time signature it is grudgingly participating in. Mills's best tracks, such as "I Luv U" and "Stop Dat," are like arguments between two implacable robot telemarketers. If popular music is how each young generation establishes its voice and draws borders with surrounding generations, grime has done it in a fairly logical way. Adults are just organic, fallible, dishonest creatures. Hard drives and cell phones are always there.

Working with his own music at Irving Plaza, Mills was relentless. When he started rhyming over the instrumental of the American hip-hop hit "Tipsy," he outclassed the song's original performer, J-Kwon, in a handful of verses. His most flattering collaborator, though, was silence. Several times, his d.j. stopped playing records and Mills rhymed a cappella. His accent is strong and his voice slightly stopped up, as if there were no easy way for him to say anything. But Mills *can* say just about anything, and more nimbly than your average human (or machine). As he built up his oration, angle by angle, the crowd followed along, cheering so generously that it was somewhat disappointing when plain old music returned. On his new album, "Showtime," due in September, Mills reduces the musical aggression to make room for his increasingly virtuosic rapping. There's plenty to rhyme about. The past year has been tumultuous for him—he was stabbed at a club in Ayia Napa, a resort on Cyprus. The assault gets a brief mention in "Respect Me," but Mills's larger questions are roughly the same: How can I avoid the constable? Why are you standing so close to me? How did I get here?

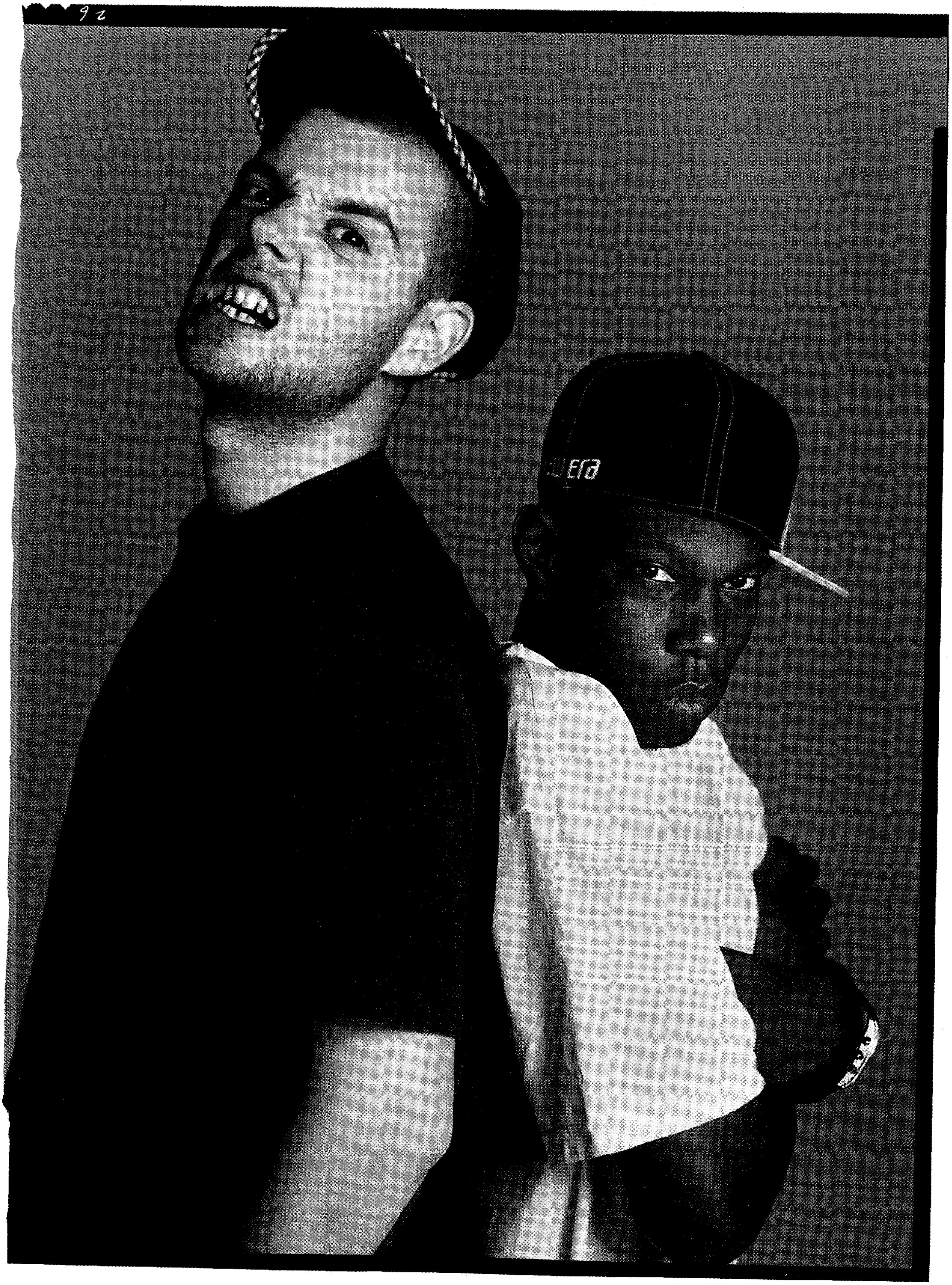
Skinner and Mills both have the confidence not to talk about dominant themes in American chart hip-hop: pliant women, amphibious vehicles, bottomless pride. Skinner and Mills prefer questions to assertions, doubt the loyalty of their friends, and struggle with women who appear in songs as real voices, not just abstract conquests.

Mills is Skinner's vocal superior, but it is the white artist who is faring better commercially in America. A baby-faced, big-eyed kid, fond of track suits and short hair, Skinner at first glance easily fits the English lad stereotype—the Everyman who fights at soccer matches and drinks too much. He flirts, and lines his apartment with empty cans, but he also worries about it all. Is that girl too fit to talk to? I read in a magazine that if she plays with her hair she likes me. Why is the jacket I lent to my girlfriend in my friend's apartment? Why aren't my friends calling me back? My cell battery's almost flat. Ah, it is flat.

Skinner's first album, "Original Pirate Material," was nominally attached to U.K. garage. His new album has nothing to do with garage—or grime, for that matter. In some respects, he's moving away from music itself. On "A Grand Don't Come for Free," the urge to create pop songs takes a back seat to telling the story. The timid incidental music sup-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

No boasting, please, we're British: Mike Skinner (The Streets) and Dylan Mills (Dizzee Rascal).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ports a movie-length narrative about a particularly bad day. Skinner misplaces a thousand pounds (hence the title), goes through a breakup, swallows two pills that "taste like hairspray," and negotiates a series of fickle friendships. To drive home the cinematic parallel, the album offers two different endings, like the film "Sliding Doors."

If Mills is our computer-generated android of fury and disappointment, Skinner is our messy, unreconstructed reality-show contestant. Skinner's vocals often sound distorted, as if he had narrated the album on the phone, rhyming over whatever was on the telly behind him. The dual endings even imply a chance for us to vote, à la "American Idol." Should Mike be happy? Should Mike and Simone get back together? Does he really deserve to find the lost money? Skinner is a marginal rapper and couldn't hold his own with American leaders like Eminem and Jay-Z. If there are precedents for what he is doing now, they are to be found in the popular culture of British working-class mini-epics—Madness's "Our House," the Who's "Quadrophenia." Just a boy, an empty bank account, a worried mum at home, and all the lager he can drink.

Live, Skinner becomes an even match for Dizzee. On his first American tour, in 2002, Skinner seemed little more than a tentative young man with a cordless microphone, unsure of how to get his songs across. Many shows later, he and his live band have learned how to charm a room, and can transform their rinky-dink bedroom tracks into hardy sing-alongs. Onstage, Skinner is an admixture of fan and host, breaking into small dances and trading lines with his backup singer, Leo, as if it were simply another drunken Friday night and the boys were singing along to Radio 1. At Irving Plaza, Skinner poured plastic cups of brandy for audience members and, somewhat forcefully, distributed "leafy root vegetables" from the backstage spread. With the salient exception of the excellent rock single "Fit but You Know It," Skinner performs over a soundtrack drawn from English dance music, most of it foreign to American audiences. What will be familiar to anyone living in any city is the feeling of finding lost money, having one too many, and hoping that somebody will listen to your story. ♦

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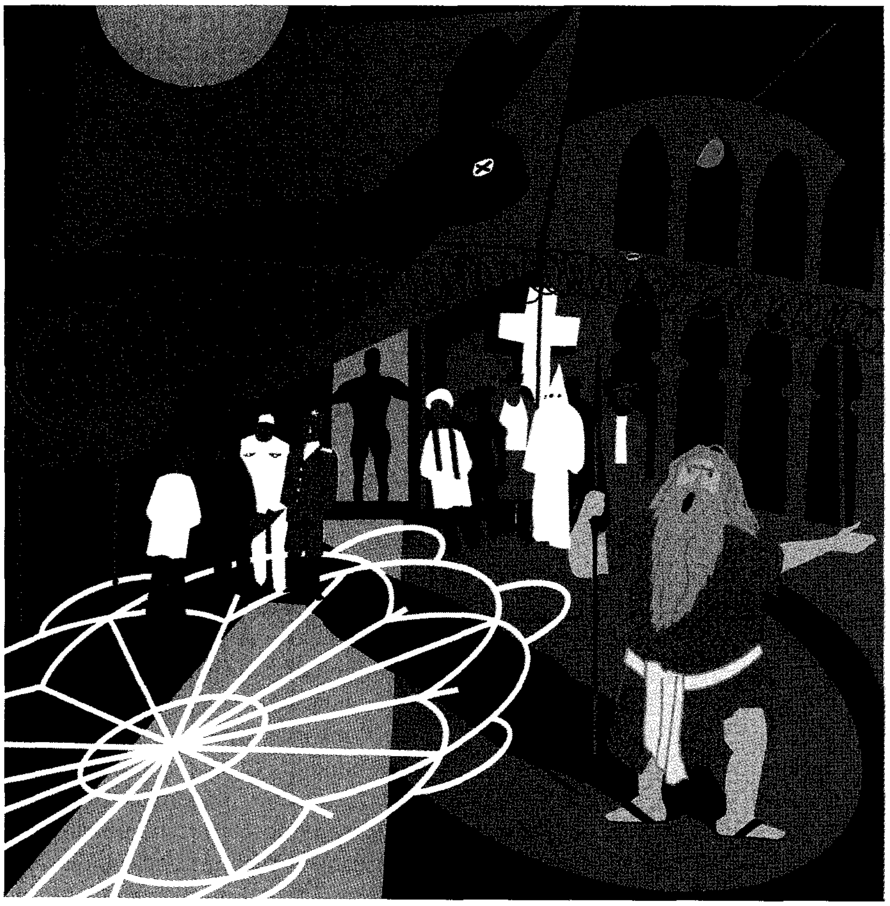
MUSICAL EVENTS

NAUSEA

A new "Parsifal" at Bayreuth.

BY ALEX ROSS

"A ray of light: the Grail is fully radiant. A dove floats down from the dome above." These are Richard Wagner's stage directions for the maximally transcendent final moments of "Parsifal," his last opera. Christoph Schlingensief's production at the Bayreuth Festival last week gave us instead two dead rabbits, their rotting bodies intertwined, their images projected on a screen above the stage. We then saw a sped-up film of one rabbit decomposing, its body frothing as the maggots did their work. I've seen a lot of stupid, repulsive, irritating, befuddling, and boring things on opera stages over the years, but Schlingensief's dead-rabbit climax was something new: for the first time, I left a theatre feeling, like, ready to hurl.



For all its jaw-dropping lapses in taste, Schlingensief's staging was mainly dull chaos.

RICHARD McGUIRE

The trouble with this sort of provocation is that if you criticize it, even with an involuntary emetic reflex, you end up playing a role that the instigator has written for you. You are cast as the reactionary, the sentimentalist, the sort of person who requires a kitschy white dove, as if white doves and rotting rabbits were the only options. You are suspected of harboring Fascist tendencies. When Endrik Wottrich, the tenor who sang Parsifal, disavowed Schlingensief's attempt to transplant the action to Namibia, the director accused him of having uttered racist slurs. No matter that the staging was full of hackneyed "darkest Africa" imagery, with several singers done up in inky blackface; the provocateur will always have the upper hand against the provoked. "If my enemies shout 'boo' at the première, then all is in order," Schlingensief told *Stern*. Indeed, when the curtain fell, the audience responded with the loudest, lustiest boos I've heard outside of Yankee Stadium. Less than a third of the audience applauded when Schlingensief took his bow. In other words, a triumph.

A curious charade played out in the press afterward: everyone denied that anything untoward had happened. The bigwigs who had walked down the red carpet at the gala "Parsifal" première said nothing negative when a reporter from the *Nordbayerischer Kurier* canvassed their opinions. Edmund Stoiber, the Minister-President of Bavaria, claimed that the production had suited him "because it presented an entirely new point of view." José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, found it only logical that "Parsifal" had been transplanted from Germany to Africa. (The opera is set in Spain, but never mind.) Who, then, had made all that noise? Perhaps ordinary opera lovers who had paid for their tickets? When I read the reviews two days later, I was amazed to discover that there hadn't been any scandal at all—only a few boos, perhaps. A new reality was agreed upon that had little to do with what had happened in the theatre.

It's all politics, of course. Because German opera houses are heavily supported by state and local governments, the audience's opinion is relatively immaterial; productions are bought and sold in a marketplace of intellectual publicity. Whenever I attend this kind of opera-esque event, I feel as though I were being called upon to judge some intricate sport I don't understand, like synchronized swimming. Still, opera it nominally remained, and, as opera, it was god-awful.

Schlingensief is what the Germans call an *Aktionskünstler*, or "action artist," meaning that his theatre pieces take the form not of conventional performances but of happenings, demonstrations, media pranks, talk shows, even B movies. He is the head of something called the Church of Fear, one of whose slogans is "Don't expect too much from the end of the world!" He is notorious for taunting politicians; in 1997, he was arrested for displaying signs that said, "Kill Helmut Kohl." In 2002, he targeted Jürgen Möllemann, of the Free Democratic Party, who had allegedly made anti-Semitic slurs. Schlingensief staged mock neo-Nazi rallies with banners modelled on the F.D.P. colors. "Kill Möllemann," he reportedly said. A year later, Möllemann committed suicide by cutting loose his parachute while skydiving. To be sure, the politician had bigger problems to deal with than Schlingensief's antics: he had recently been accused of alarming financial irregularities. But the coincidence was striking.

The decision to unleash this scary clown on Bayreuth came as a result of ongoing debates over the future of the festival, which, since 1967, has been solely in the hands of Wolfgang Wagner, the composer's eighty-four-year-old grandson. Pundits had urged Wolfgang to bring in new directors and to appoint a more daring successor. In response, he asked Lars von Trier to direct the "Ring" in 2006—an assignment von Trier has now declined—and also hired Schlingensief, who had never directed opera before, and who once said of Wagner, "I hate his music and his lyrics." Nonetheless, Schlingensief wasn't necessarily an absurd choice; after all, Wagner himself had once been a left-wing firebrand with anarchist leanings. Schlingensief's projects in the months before the première—staging race-car rallies with Wagner blasting from loudspeakers, for example—led me to expect something gaudy and raucous, perhaps with a thuggish Fascist swagger. (This artist obviously gets off on striking Nazi poses, even as he condemns others for doing so.) However dubious its sources, Brechtian grandstanding can be galvanic in the right theatrical hands.

But Schlingensief never got a grip on "Parsifal." He started off with the adolescent conviction that the opera was all about death. He took trips to Namibia and came back laden with sub-Saharan folklore. He imagined witch-doctor scenarios in which the Holy Grail takes the form of totemic objects and creatures. Enter the rabbit: a live one is seen onstage during the Act I procession of the Grail Knights, and globes emblazoned with Joseph Beuys rabbit figures hang over the magic castle in Act II. There are dim stirrings of a good idea here—Wagner's drama as an earthy rite rather than an Aryan ceremony. Done far more simply, it might have attained a surreal beauty. But Schlingensief botched the transformation. When Kundry, in Act III, was costumed as a big black mamma, the audience burst into giggles. Was the intrepid African explorer commenting on stereotypes or was he recycling them? Certainly, he had not "de-sacralized" the opera, as some critics said. He just put new mumbo-jumbo in the place of Wagner's. In this respect, his version resembled the secularized "Parsifal" that Hitler commissioned in 1934, to the distress of many old Wagnerians.

Despite jaw-dropping lapses of taste throughout, the general impression was of dull chaos. Schlingensief made heavy use of a rotating stage, which became a lazy Susan conveying assorted art-world and pop-culture artifacts, including Andy Warhol soup cans, David Lynch freaks, graffiti and placards, muscleboys, "Flintstones" and "Lord of the Rings" costumes. It was difficult to see it all amid the obscure lighting, although I wouldn't blame the lighting designer for this, since the blocking was too random for spotlights to track any one figure. The entire thing was like a nightmarish avant-garde counterpart to one of Franco Zeffirelli's overstuffed Met productions, except that no one knew what they were supposed to be doing. The ineptitude of the direction was obvious in the final scene, when Amfortas had to fight his way out from under a curtain that landed on his head.

On some other plane of existence, singers were singing and an orchestra was playing. The only singer who gave a memorable, fleshed-out performance was John Wegner, as Klingsor; for once, the evil magician was sung and not rasped. But I'm not inclined to condemn the other singers—Alexander Marco-Buhrmester, as Amfortas; Robert Holl, as Gurnemanz; Michelle De Young, as Kundry; and Kwangchul Youn, as Titurel—given the harsh working conditions. Some kind of medal should be given to Wottrich, who dared to criticize the director and then endured his hypocritical anti-Fascist posturing.

Pierre Boulez returned to Bayreuth for the first time since 1980, when he last conducted Patrice Chéreau's classic production of the "Ring." He led a beautifully controlled performance that managed to cut nearly an hour off the usual running time without ever sounding rushed. Particularly strong was the Act III Prelude, which pulsed weirdly, like a flickering bulb. It would have perfectly evoked the torpor overcoming Wagner's knights, if there had been any knights. In another context, Boulez's interpretation might have seemed too refined and becalmed, but in conjunction with Schlingensief's busy nullity the music was a ray in the darkness, a Grail glowing out of sight.

What a change the following evening, when Christian Thielemann led a revival of "Tannhäuser." Maybe the "Parsifal" nightmare left me starved for nourishment, but this was the strongest Wagner performance I'd heard in years. Philippe Arlaud's production, which had its première in 2002, is a serviceable, vibrantly colored affair, placed in a vaguely Eurasian medieval setting. It sometimes dangled, but never fell, over the edge of kitsch. The great thing about the set design was what it did for the sound: its main oval room became a huge, resonating chamber. In the Pilgrims' Scene of Act III, the Bayreuth Festival Chorus entered from an unseen chasm in the back and then disappeared into an unseen chasm in the front. Wagner called his sunken orchestra pit the "mystic abyss"; in this production there were three abysses, and the sound took on a hallucinatory, sculptured richness as it soared up from one pit or another.

The second great thing about this "Tannhäuser" was the lead singer, the young American tenor Stephen Gould. He has a powerful, flexible, beautiful voice, and, wonder of wonders, he is a charismatic actor. He sounded just as vivid at the end of the opera as he did at the beginning, which is a sign that he has the stamina for the biggest Wagner roles. The third great thing was Thielemann, who sounds more happily inspired every time I hear him. Shaking off Teutonic heaviness, he now favors shimmering textures, dancing rhythms, and endless singing lines. The storm of applause for the conductor, for the singers, and for the incomparable Bayreuth chorus seemed not only an affirmation of what had just been heard but a protest against the previous night. Bayreuth returned to sanity, at least for a moment. When Thielemann conducts the 2006 "Ring," with Gould as Siegfried, I'll be there, even if the management decides to replace Lars von Trier with Paris Hilton. Please, Herr Wagner: this is a joke, not a suggestion. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

THRILLED TO DEATH

"Collateral," "The Bourne Supremacy," and "The Manchurian Candidate."

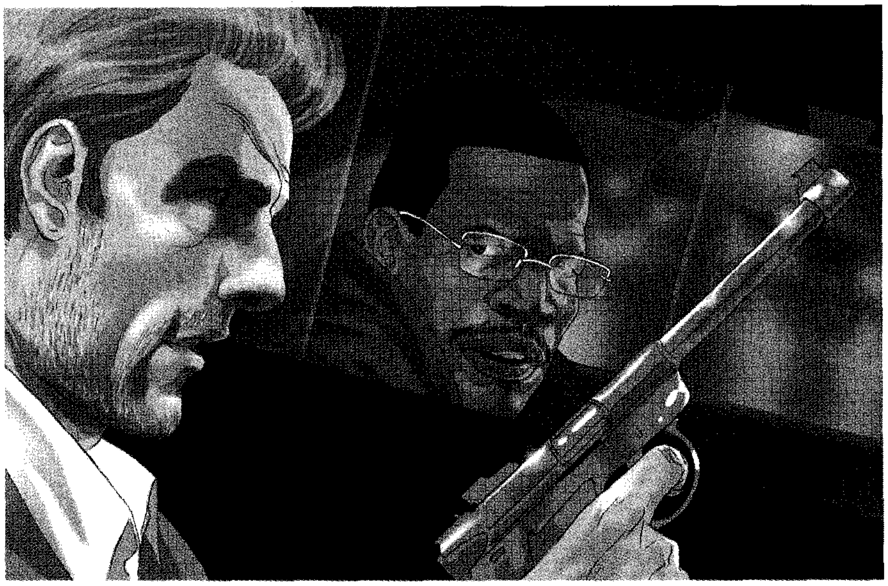
BY DAVID DENBY

In the second half of the Graham Greene–Carol Reed classic "The Third Man" (1949), the blundering, well-meaning American Joseph Cotten finally confronts his dazzling friend Orson Welles, who has been selling watered-down penicillin to hospitals in postwar Vienna. High up in an enormous Ferris wheel, Cotten asks Welles if he has ever faced one of his victims. Welles responds:

> Victims? Don't be melodramatic. Look down there. Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to eat my money—or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spend?

Welles's remarks have an insidious brilliance, and, whatever else the Ferris-wheel scene means, it has always figured for me as a mischievous little allegory of the moviegoer's relation to death onscreen. In movies, and particularly in thrillers, people get blown away very easily, and sometimes by the dozen; most of them are nameless hoods, and, usually, their deaths mean nothing to us. The appeal of the thriller genre—it's hardly a secret—is essentially amoral. By that I don't mean that we are complicit in mayhem, only that many of us enjoy watching it artfully staged. When someone dies, the payoff comes not in the form of twenty thousand pounds but in the unnegotiable currency of excitement.

Thrillers produce two kinds of emotion. First comes apprehension—the hunter drawing near, the catastrophe unfolding, the everyday world altered into a sinister landscape of danger. The audience is paralyzed with fear and anticipation. And then comes violence, which releases the tension. The bloodshed may, in the end, only increase our fear, but at least for a time we're not breathless with anxiety. Relieved, we want the violence to go beyond what's possible in life—we need that heightening the way an ordinary sedan needs a turbo engine—but not too far beyond it. Even as we require exaggeration, we want to be allowed to believe that the violence is "real." That is, we don't wish to be reminded too explicitly of our need. Thrillers enter into a sinful, slightly duplicitous transaction with our desire to be entertained. The greatest thrillers, however, go beyond the transaction and take up the challenge offered by Orson Welles in the Ferris-wheel scene; they make us wonder if the deaths of strangers should somehow matter to us.



Tom Cruise is a killer and Jamie Foxx his taxi-driver in Michael Mann's "Collateral."

TOMER HANUKA

Among the big-budget Hollywood thrillers of midsummer, Jonathan Demme's "The Manchurian Candidate," pitched for contemporary relevance, is the one that should make us care for its characters most; Paul Greengrass's "The Bourne Supremacy" has little relevance to anything except its own extraordinary bullet-train virtuosity; and Michael Mann's "Collateral," the best of the three, not only is beautifully made but has the largest human significance. As it happens, the chief menace in the movie, a dead-eyed contract killer named Vincent (Tom Cruise), says pretty much the same thing that Welles says to Cotten in "The Third Man." Vincent shows up in Los Angeles at dusk and expects to leave at dawn. His job: to eliminate five witnesses in an impending federal prosecution of a drug cartel. "Collateral," written by Stuart Beattie (with much additional shaping by Mann), is about the peculiar bond that develops between this stone killer and a sweet-tempered taxi-driver, one Max Durocher (Jamie Foxx), who gets bullied by Vincent into providing transportation all through the night. The people Vincent kills—minor members of the drug operation who've been forced by the feds into coöperating—aren't meant to be innocent. But Vincent has no connection to them. He doesn't hate them; he doesn't feel anything about them at all. It doesn't take Max long to realize that he, too, may be eliminated before the night is over. Yet he's more baffled than frightened. He likes peace and quiet—the solitude of his own fantasies as he's driving around—and he wants to know, Why kill people? Shrugging, Vincent mentions billions of men and women on Earth, billions of stars above it. Who cares if someone dies? He talks in brief spurts connected by dashes. "Darwin," he says, definitively, by which he means that evolution, a remorseless, amoral process, depends on death. The plot of "Collateral" is just a movieish contrivance, and the violence no more than thuggishly casual and chic—that is, very enjoyable. But "Collateral" picks up some genuine weight as this odd couple carry on their weird, terse dialogue. After a while, Vincent takes on

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a small measure of Max's gentleness, and Max, passive and dreamy by nature, learns to seize the moment. If he doesn't act, how is he going to survive Vincent?

As Vincent, Tom Cruise looks like a gray wolf on the prowl—hair lightened and brushed straight up, a salt-and-pepper beard, a beautifully tailored silver-gray suit. Cruise keeps his gleaming choppers out of sight, doesn't hog the camera, moves swiftly, and sticks to the character, a bitterly intelligent nihilist who kills nonchalantly, insolently, as if murder were a series of technical problems. The performance is a stunt, of course, but it's fascinating to hear a major box-office star express his admiration—as Vincent does, listening intently—for a jazz trumpeter who plays a little behind the beat. Cruise has always been a little too much *on* the beat—a sincerely hardworking but uninteresting actor. His Vincent is something new—a bebop murderer, an improviser who loves danger. As Max, Jamie Foxx slows himself down. His taxi-driver is in hiding—an intelligent, sorrowful man who's almost too gentle, as if he thought the disorderly world might shape up if only he addressed it calmly, with respect. As the implacable Vincent takes over Max's life, Jamie Foxx's discomfort is both painful and funny.

The Miami of Mann's emblematic eighties TV series, "Miami Vice," was candied and luminously white, a city oozing luxury, pleasure, and corruption; his Los Angeles is both exuberantly colorful—an ethnic wonderland—and noirishly menacing. "Collateral" was photographed from dusk to dawn, much of it with digital cameras that "see" into the darkness better than film. Shot by shot, scene by scene, Mann, whose recent work includes "Heat" and "The Insider," may be the best director in Hollywood. I don't mean that he's the greatest artist. He lacks such qualities as the tormented humanism of Scorsese, the generous showmanship and warmth of Spielberg, the moral curiosity of the Clint Eastwood who directed "Unforgiven" and "Mystic River." But Mann has become a master builder of sequences, the opposite of the contemporary action directors who produce a brutally meaningless whirl of movement. Methodical and precise, he analyzes a scene into minute components—a door closing, an arm thrust out—and gathers the fragments into seamless units; he wants you to live inside the physical event, not just experience the sensation of it. "Collateral" comes off like clockwork, but it's a clock that breathes—great actors like Mark Ruffalo, Javier Bardem, and Barry Shabaka Henley have sustained, intricate moments in the pauses between the violent acts. Initially, I was puzzled by a long, quiet scene right at the beginning of the movie between Jamie Foxx's taxi-driver and a passenger, a stylishly dressed federal prosecutor played by Jada Pinkett Smith. Beattie and Mann stop to explore the class differences between the two and the attorney's slow acceptance of the cabbie as a man. But this lingering episode pays off at the end. "Collateral" is a thriller about a feral man who can't persuade himself not to kill people. Jamie Foxx and Jada Pinkett Smith, making their connection, give him—and us—a reason to care about survival.

Fast, faster, and fastest—that's the way the cutting rate goes in "The Bourne Supremacy." The director, Paul Greengrass, jumps ahead within scenes, then jumps again. Greengrass is like a man breathing so fast that he never draws much oxygen into his lungs. Putting it mildly, this style of shallow, panting composition isn't the way I'd like movies to go, but, of its kind, "The Bourne Supremacy" is incredibly skilled—much more exciting than its predecessor, "The Bourne Identity" (2002). The sequel, written by Tony Gilroy, from a Robert Ludlum novel, covers a lot of ground—Goa, Naples, Berlin, Moscow, and, when I blinked, perhaps Madagascar and Sardinia, too. Greengrass arranges pursuits and escapes that fly like arrows. He tears up staid old Moscow in a car chase and turns routine C.I.A. procedural stuff—people looking at computer screens and barking code names and other gibberish at each other—into nerve-racking contests of will. "The Bourne Supremacy" is stripped down for action, and its hero—the survivor of a botched operation who suffers from amnesia—has no identity beyond his superlative physical skills and a vague sense of guilt. Harried, chased, both hunted and hunter, Matt Damon is cut off from the C.I.A. and from himself. He's a superhero reduced to pure reflex, at home only when he's on the lam. Yet, by means of his isolation and his stoicism, he becomes almost a romantic figure. There is, of course, an enormously successful franchise in the making here. But one does begin to wonder: How many movies can be squeezed out of a hero doomed always to wander? Wagner composed "The Flying Dutchman" only once.

Once upon a time, when John Kennedy was President and the War was Cold, a spate of brilliantly entertaining movies was generated by the fear of Communism and nuclear conflict—"Fail-Safe," "Seven Days in May," "Dr. Strangelove," and John Frankenheimer's "The Manchurian Candidate." This last, dating from 1962, and adapted by George Axelrod from the 1959 Richard Condon novel, was in some ways the most unsettling of the four. The basic premise—that the Communists would try to take over by getting a Joe McCarthy-type anti-Communist into the White House—turned paranoia into satire that, in the end, cut both ways, attacking both the far left and the far right. The movie's style—authoritative voice-over narration at the beginning, sombre black-and-white cinematography—was at times uncannily reminiscent of the public-spirited features produced during the Second World War and immediately after. Yet all this sobriety was undermined by some of the strangest scenes and words ever to appear in a mainstream Hollywood movie: a brainwashing episode in which American soldiers were convinced by their Chinese and Russian captors that they were being addressed by floral-hatted members of a New Jersey garden club; bits of unaccountable neo-Dada dialogue like "Are you Arabic? Let me put it another way. Are you married?" It was as if Lenny Bruce had mated with the Office of War Information.

The most depressing thing about the Jonathan Demme remake is that there isn't a joke in it anywhere. The first version was acidulous and brazenly absurd; this one is doggedly, wretchedly earnest. The Communists have been replaced by a shadowy big company reminiscent of Halliburton or the Carlyle Group, a change that turns satire of paranoia back into just plain paranoia. Brainwashing has been replaced by an implanted computer chip, which turns a creepy psychological threat into sci-fi banality. The bad memories of the hero (Denzel Washington) are accompanied by the conventional horror-film frights of painted faces, spooky doctors, and smoky, distorted cinematography; Meryl Streep, in the old Angela Lansbury role, is entertainingly bitchy, but making her up to resemble Hillary Clinton doesn't mean anything in particular. The movie is overwrought and unfocussed, and, for all the talk in the press about its relevance to the fears of the moment, "The Manchurian Candidate" isn't likely to make contact with what most people are actually feeling—which is the palpable sensation that any of us might be reduced to "dots," as Orson Welles put it, killed without remorse. ♦

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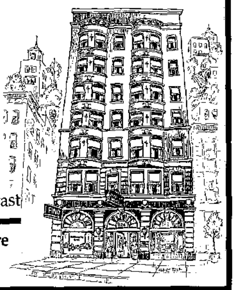

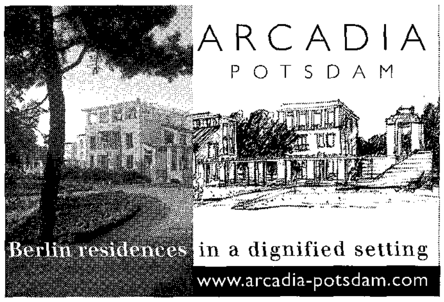

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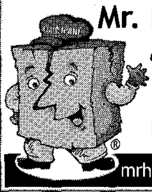

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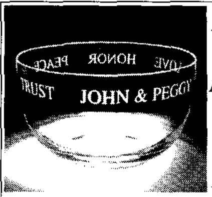

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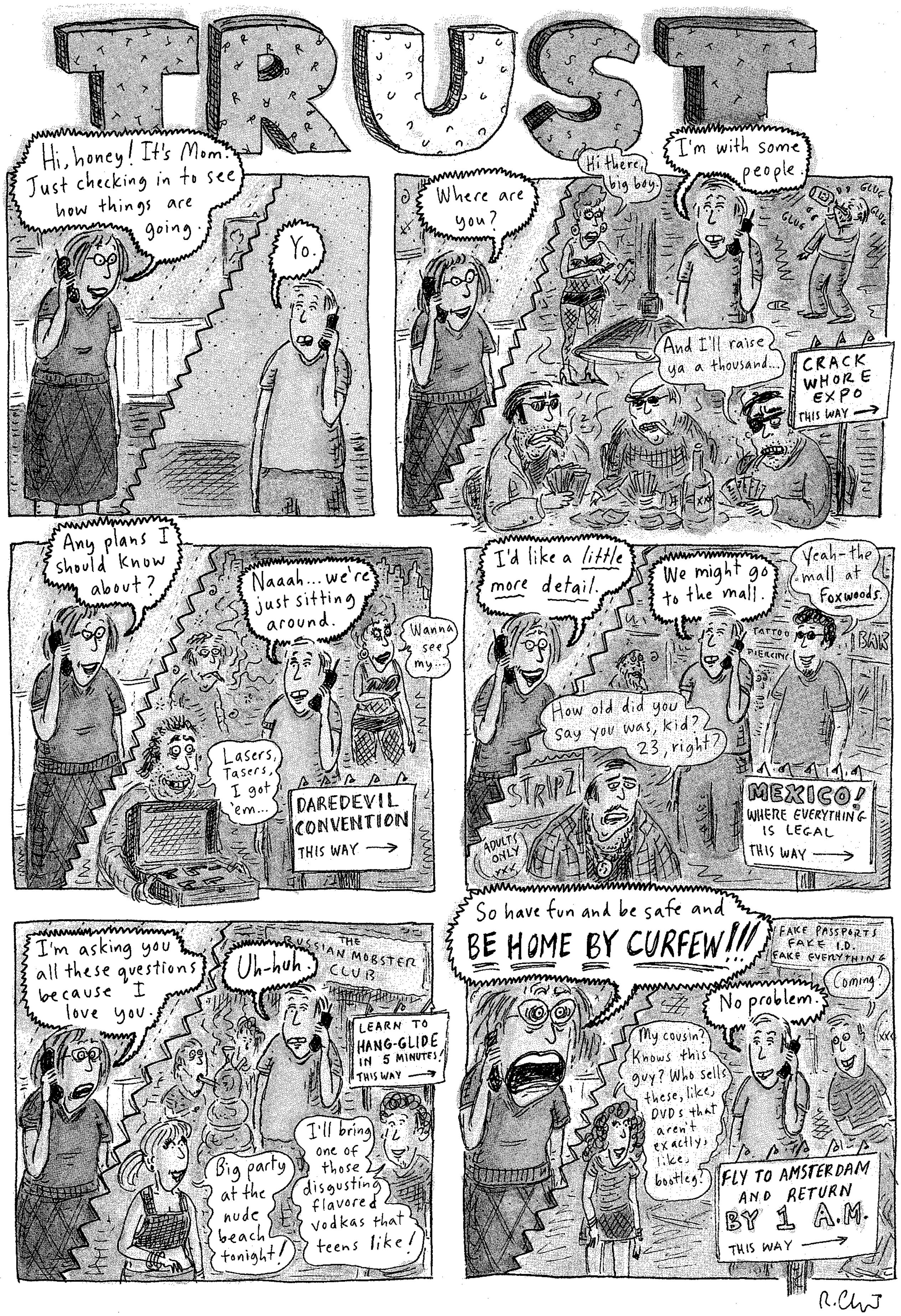
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Hi, honey! It's Mom. Just checking in to see how things are going.
Yo.
Where are you?
Hi there, big boy.
I'm with some people.
GLUG GLUG GLUG
And I'll raise ya a thousand...
CRACK WHORE EXPO THIS WAY →
Any plans I should know about?
Naaah... we're just sitting around.
Wanna see my...
Lasers, Tasers, I got 'em...
DAREDEVIL CONVENTION THIS WAY →
I'd like a *little* more detail.
We might go to the mall.
Yeah- the mall at Foxwoods.
TATTOO PIERCING
BAR
How old did you say you was, kid? 23, right?
STRIPZ
ADULTS ONLY XXX
MEXICO! WHERE EVERYTHING IS LEGAL THIS WAY →
I'm asking you all these questions because I love you.
Uh-huh.
THE RUSSIAN MOBSTER CLUB
LEARN TO HANG-GLIDE IN 5 MINUTES! THIS WAY →
Big party at the nude beach tonight!
I'll bring one of those disgusting flavored vodkas that teens like!
So have fun and be safe and BE HOME BY CURFEW!!!
FAKE PASSPORTS FAKE I.D. FAKE EVERYTHING
Coming?
No problem.
My cousin? Knows this guy? Who sells these, like, DVDs that aren't exactly, like, bootleg?
FLY TO AMSTERDAM AND RETURN BY 1 A.M. THIS WAY →
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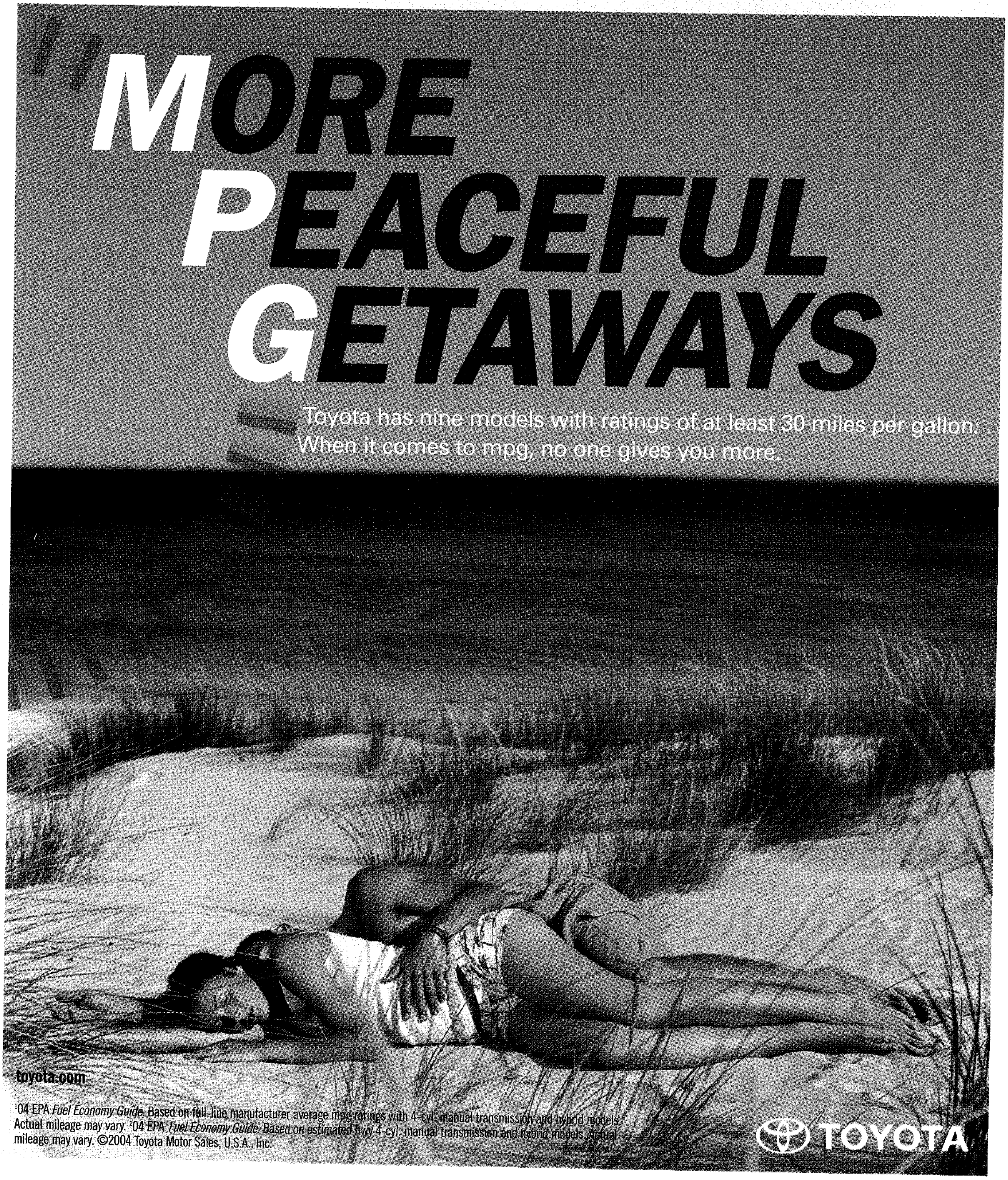

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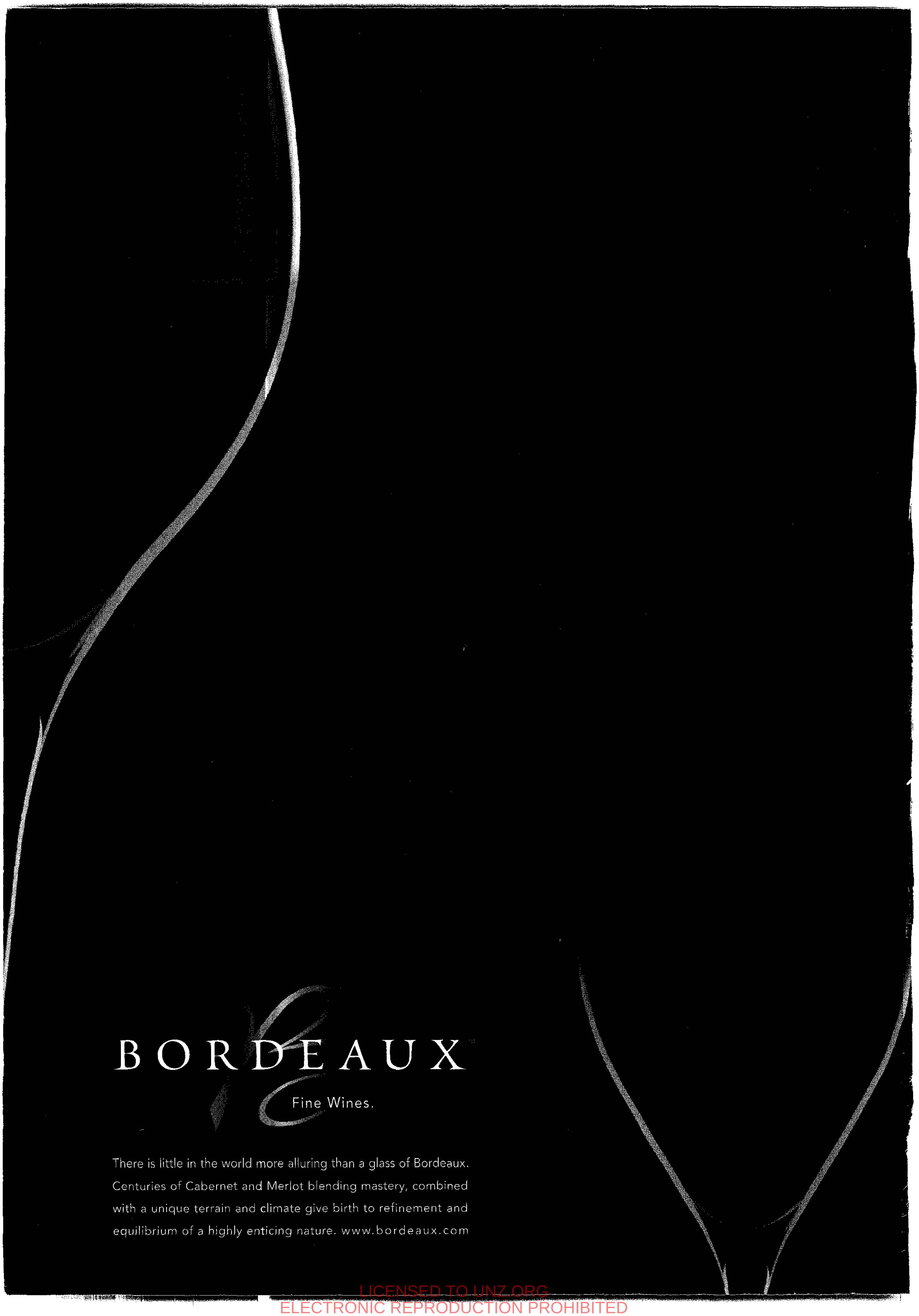

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